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ALBERT ROUSSEL

AND HIS PLACE IN MUSICAL TRADITION

Thesis submitted for the degree of

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of the

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by

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PREFACE

Albert Roussel is generally accepted as one of the most important French composers of the twentieth century. But no detailed critical estimate of his music has yet been attempted. The three principal French biographers, Louis Vuillemin, Arthur Hoérée and Robert Bernard, were all personal friends of the composer, and their judgments lack objectivity, to a greater or lesser extent. The only book on Roussel in English, that of Norman Demuth, is factually unreliable and superficial in its criticism. W. H. Mellers' essay on the composer, although more stimulating in its general approach, does not deal with the music in any detail.

This thesis, therefore, is an attempt to evaluate Roussel's music critically in its historic and national context, and thereby to arrive at an estimate of his place in musical tradition.

The biographical chapters are based on information derived from the three French authorities mentioned above, as well as from the Catalogue of Roussel's oeuvre. The material has, however, been correlated afresh, with the aim of elucidating the

composer's personality and his conception of his art. The critical assessments and general conclusions of the succeeding chapters are original. Where the views of other writers have been taken into account, specific reference is made to the sources.

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CHAPTER I

The Formative Years

During the second half of the nineteenth century Tourcoing, in Northern France, was a thriving and rapidly expanding industrial centre. Like many other Flanders towns, it had a long connection with the textile trade, and its economy was based on the manufacture of thread, carpets, tapestries and other textile products. Tourcoing had little claim on the attention of tourists: it had suffered throughout its history from the religious and secular wars which had devastated Flanders, and there was no outstanding architecture to compensate the visitor for the noise and grime of a manufacturing town. But the more fortunate among those who lived there had the opportunity, in an age of expansion, of establishing or continuing a prosperous family business and of taking part in civil and municipal affairs, while cultivating the arts, as far as their inclinations and commitments permitted, in their moments of leisure. There was an excellent college in the town for their children, and, for those who were musically inclined, a Conservatoire de Musique in the neighbouring town of Roubaix.

Among the families most prominent in the commercial life of the region was that of Roussel. The firm of

Réquillard, Roussel et Choquerel was one of the best-known and most progressive in the district; they were especially renowned for their carpets and tapestries. The Roussels were respected, moreover, not only for their commercial achievements, but also for their tradition of service to the community. In 1815 a Roussel de Livry was elected by his fellow-citizens to command a civil guard charged with the maintenance of order during the troubled period of the Hundred Days. Later Charles Roussel Defontaine held the office of Mayor of Tourcoing for some thirty years, apparently to the satisfaction of the townspeople, who named a public square in his memory. It was to his son and daughter-in-law, Louise (also a Roussel by birth, although her family was not related to that of her husband), that a son was born in Tourcoing on 5th April, 1869. An only child, he was named Albert Charles Paul Marie Roussel after his father. The parents' joy was brief, however, for when the boy was one year old, his father died of consumption. In her distress, the young widow lavished all her care and attention upon her son; he in turn was devoted to her and preserved a tender memory of her throughout his life. Finally, unable to reconcile

herself to her loss, Louise Roussel, too, died in 1877.

Left without parents, brothers or sisters, the young Albert was taken to live with his grandfather, and had to adapt himself to a new environment. The mayor was inevitably much occupied with his official duties, and the sensitive and affectionate child was left to his own devices, and obliged to make his own amusements. His mother, who was musically gifted, had taught him the rudiments of theory and piano-playing, so he explored the family music collection and read at the piano the operatic selections and popular songs which he found there. In 1877 he began his general schooling at the college in Tourcoing.

In 1880 another change took place in the young boy's life. His grandfather died, and he was entrusted to the care of his maternal aunt, Mme. Félix Réquillard, and went to live with her family. His uncle, impressed by his interest in music, arranged for him to have piano lessons from Mlle. Ducrême, the organist of Notre-Dame in Tourcoing; he showed promise as an executant, and pleased his teacher by his excellent musical sense.

Albert was a delicate child, whose state of health gave his relations cause for anxiety. Once a year,

however, the family left the smoky atmosphere of the town and spent two months at the small seaside resort of Heyst in Belgium. The annual holiday did more than improve the boy's physical health; it gave him his first contact with the sea, which was to play such an important part in his development. His interest in the sea and in travel was further stimulated by his reading of Jules Verne, who became his favourite author; and by the age of fifteen he was determined to make the Navy his career. His guardians having given their consent, he was sent as a boarder to the Collège Stanislas in Paris to prepare for the necessary entrance examinations.

Here he worked conscientiously at the subjects in the curriculum, and in particular developed an interest in mathematics which he maintained throughout his life. In spite of the heavy programme of study, he still found time for music. Jules Stoltz, organist of the Church of Saint-Ambroise and director of music in the college, introduced him to the music of Bach and Mozart, Beethoven and Chopin, and his uncle, on his visits to the capital, took him to the theatre, where he saw the popular operas of the day, Carmen, Manon and

La Favorita.

In 1887, he passed the first part of the Baccalauréat and was accepted for entry into the Ecole Navale as a cadet, coming sixteenth out of more than five hundred candidates. He reported for duty on the Borda, the naval training ship anchored at Brest, and settled down to the regular routine of intellectual and physical work, which left no time for any serious musical study. At the end of the two-year course he became a midshipman second class and embarked on the frigate Iphigénie for a ten months' cruise. The ship visited many Atlantic and Mediterranean ports, so that for the first time Roussel was able to realise his dreams of travel. He was then transferred to the battleship Dévastation, of the Mediterranean squadron. Here he had access to a piano, and made an abortive attempt to study Durand's Treatise on Harmony. His health, always uncertain, broke down in 1891, when he was compelled to take convalescent leave.

After his recovery, he embarked at Brest on the Melpomène, one of the last sailing-ships in commission with the French Navy, and went on a summer cruise in the Atlantic. Years later he wrote nostalgically:

'Nothing is more bewitching than the slow, gentle rocking of a ship leaning to the breeze. Nothing is more delightful than to breathe the salty freshness of the ocean, when one is stretched out on the maintop beneath the splendour of a billowing top-sail. Gone are the days when sailors could still experience these joys in the caressing monotony of long voyages.' (1)

On his return, he was posted to the cruiser Victorieuse, based at Cherbourg. Here he had some leisure, which he used to widen his musical experience by playing piano trios of Beethoven and the Romantic composers with two friends. He had already made some attempts at composition; but it was at Cherbourg that he had his first public performance - an Andante for string trio and organ was played in the Church of the Trinity in Cherbourg on Christmas Day, 1892. His interest in composition was stimulated by the modest success of this piece, and in the following year he composed a Marche Nuptiale, which one of his fellow-officers, Adolphe Calvet, offered to show to the conductor Edouard Colonne. Returning the manuscript, Calvet told Roussel that Colonne's advice was that he should give up his naval career for that of a musician. This was an impressive instance of Calvet's confidence in his friend's potential ability, as he was later to admit that Colonne had in fact never seen the manuscript.

(1) Bernard: Albert Roussel, p.16.

Such counsel, coming as he thought from so eminent an authority, could not fail to carry weight with Roussel; but he was not yet ready to take the final decision. Now a sub-lieutenant, he was sent on the gun-boat Styx to Siam, where some political trouble threatened. The outward voyage was long and uncomfortable and, as it turned out, unnecessary; so the ship was disarmed and Roussel sent back to France immediately on a troop transport. He obtained leave and went to Roubaix, where his family now lived, and consulted the director of the Roubaix Conservatoire, Jules Koszul. Koszul was favourably impressed by his attempts at composition and encouraged him to devote himself entirely to music. His last hesitations overcome, Roussel sent his resignation to the Admiralty: this was accepted on 23rd June, 1894, and in October he left Roubaix for good and moved into a flat in Paris.

Thus Roussel began his musical studies at an age when most composers have had a thorough grounding in the elements of their art. But his years at sea had not been wasted. In the hard school of naval discipline he had learned the value of regular and persistent work, and had developed his innate capacity for

clear thought and precise expression; his life among men whose interests were essentially practical had given him a wide tolerance and a respect for other ways of life rare in an artist, while his experience of many lands and peoples, with their varying customs and traditions, had stimulated his imagination and enriched his understanding. Above all, these years had an immense significance for him in the development of his spiritual life. There are some men who have a deeply-rooted sympathy with a certain aspect of the external world, and who achieve the full flowering of their personality through an intimate contact with nature. So it was with Roussel. His love of the sea was not merely an intellectual or emotional response to an external phenomenon; it grew out of an instinctive awareness of a profound spiritual affinity, and became a guiding force in his inner evolution. The following extract from a letter written to his wife while he was on active service in the first World War shows that this love of the sea did not conflict with his devotion to his art, but was identified with it and gave it a fuller meaning:

'The sea, the sea! There is nothing more beautiful in the world, is there? And it is beside the sea that we shall fulfil

our lives and that we shall sleep, so that we may still hear in the distance her eternal murmuring. I am sorry that I left at home those splendid lines of Verhaeren which I read to you one day, you remember, and which made such a strong impression upon you. To achieve the same thing in music, to contrive to evoke all the feelings which lie hidden in the sea - the sense of power and of infinity, of charm, anger and gentleness - this must be the greatest joy that could be given in the world to an artist in the domain of his art, and, when you think about it, such an attempt seems foolish and ridiculous. And yet, if the lines of Verhaeren can convey in a striking manner this impression of grandeur and power, why should not music, which is infinitely more suited to rendering that which is elemental and imprecise, convey it also? (1)

Roussel had been recommended by Koszul to Eugène Gigout, organist at the Church of St. Augustine in Paris, who accepted him as a pupil and for the next four years gave him instruction in piano- and organ-playing, harmony and counterpoint. Gigout, a former class-mate of Gabriel Fauré at the Ecole Niedermeyer, advised him to make a special study of the old masters, and based his own instruction on the music of Bach and Handel, Mozart and Beethoven. The relationship between master and pupil was from the outset a very happy one; Gigout recognised Roussel's potential ability and moreover took a personal as well as a professorial interest in him, while Roussel for his part venerated the

(1) Bernard: op.cit., p.37.

older man and later wrote of him:

'Very broad-minded, free from academic prejudice, precise in his comments, putting musical considerations above partisan rivalries, he remains in my memory as one of the most perfect masters from whom a young composer might learn the essentials of his art...
... Add to the simplicity of the artist the kindly devotion of the man, and you will see in him one of the noblest figures that have graced the profession of music...'(1)

Even if allowance is made for the natural admiration of a pupil for his master, the fact that Roussel later dedicated to Gigout his symphonic poem Pour une Fête de printemps, one of his most uncompromisingly dissonant works, is proof of his confidence in the broad vision of his former teacher, and it is more than probable that his contact with Gigout confirmed his own essentially liberal musical outlook.

It is more difficult to assess how much of his technique Roussel owes to his first preceptor. Bernard remarks that he derived from Gigout's instruction his contrapuntal ability and his preference for the traditional forms of the symphony and the sonata, while the writer of the biographical notes in the Catalogue of Roussel's music goes further and asserts that during these years there was no form which he did not know and had not mastered, no harmonic progression which he could not

(1) Bernard: op.cit., p.19.

manipulate with ease.⁽¹⁾ Yet if we turn to the compositions of Gigout himself, most of which were written for the organ or harmonium, we discover a modest talent working within a strictly limited field. The harmony used is unadventurous, being mainly diatonic, with some elementary chromaticism and tentative experiments in the use of ecclesiastical modes. The counterpoint is fluent but unexciting, and the forms clear-cut and small in scale. In fact there is little to distinguish Gigout's work from that of any other competent organist-composer of the period. Roussel's Op.1, a suite for piano entitled Des heures passent, published in 1898, just after his period of study with Gigout had ended, is a mediocre work and does not suggest that the pupil was in advance of his master. It may well be, therefore, that Roussel's knowledge of the larger classical designs and the more advanced harmonic conjunctions was as yet more a theoretical than a practical one. In any case he worked steadily under Gigout, and in 1897 he had an encouraging success, when two four-part madrigals which he submitted under different pseudonyms in a competition organised by the Société des Compositeurs were awarded first prize ex aequo. He enlarged his musical

(1) Catalogue de l'Oeuvre d'Albert Roussel. Editor: Paris-Bruxelles, 1947, p.9.

experience by assiduous concert-going; but his natural inclinations led him to avoid rather than to seek the company of others. His annual summer holiday, during which he travelled in Europe and North Africa, did much to improve his health and assuage his nostalgia for his former life.

In 1898 Roussel was introduced by a fellow-pupil of Gigout, Mariotte, to Vincent d'Indy, who had just started his course of teaching in the newly-created Schola Cantorum, whereupon Roussel enrolled as a student there and for the next nine years followed d'Indy's lectures in composition, orchestration and musical history.

Vincent d'Indy is one of the most fascinating and paradoxical figures in the history of French music. A devout Catholic, acutely conscious of his divinely-inspired mission as a teacher, he was a man of strong prejudices and had a mediaeval propensity for developing elaborate theories from unsound premises, twisting or ignoring inconvenient facts which might present themselves. As a musician he was capable of extraordinary insight and amazing obtuseness; he regarded the Renaissance and the Reformation as unmitigated evils, yet he was one of the first to recognise the greatness of Monteverdi and was a lifelong propagandist for Bach and

Beethoven. A fervent nationalist with a genuine and practical enthusiasm for his native traditions and culture, he nevertheless believed that the future of French music lay along the paths explored by Wagner. In his teaching he continually emphasised the importance of inspiration, yet he evolved a system of composition which virtually excluded it, and was suspicious of any signs of individuality in his pupils. Although disliked by many, he was universally respected, and he extended his considerable personal charm and courtesy to all, including those whose music, ideas or religion he most violently attacked.

His impact on French musical life at the turn of the century was immense. The younger musicians of serious bent who were repelled by the superficiality of the teaching in the Conservatoire and by its almost exclusive concentration on French nineteenth-century operatic composition, saw in d'Indy, favourite pupil of the revered Franck, and fervent Wagnerite, a new focus for their ideals and aspirations, and a new source of enlightenment and instruction. Some reacted later and left the fold; but others retained their veneration for their teacher and leader throughout their lives, publicly proclaiming their adulation on every possible

occasion. This apparent excess of zeal led others to adopt a more derogatory attitude to d'Indy than they might otherwise have displayed, and consequently his stature as a musician and composer has always been very variously estimated.

Roussel was probably attracted in the first instance by d'Indy's personal qualities, by his exceptional musical erudition and by the new perspectives which the Schola Cantorum opened up to its students, rather than by the theological and aesthetic theories and the exclusive dogmatism of the teacher. His own religious position, one from which he never varied, was very different from that of d'Indy, and is expressed in a letter to his wife, dated 8th May, 1916:

'There is nothing more stupid than absolute denial, sectarianism, the persecution of any religious idea whatsoever, and nothing more deserving of respect than a belief, an intimate hope, whether probable or not, which everyone has the right to cherish in his innermost being. Between this personal belief and the absurd practices, boring dogmas, advertising, publicity, noisy and indiscreet intrusions of practically every religion, there exists a gulf which I feel sure neither of us will ever cross.' (1)

There could be no deep intimacy between the man who wrote these words and d'Indy, nor, in the end, could they share a common artistic purpose. But there could

(1) Bernard: op.cit., p. 47.

and did exist between them a mutual respect; d'Indy showed his appreciation of Roussel's ability by appointing him Professor of Counterpoint at the Schola in 1902, while Roussel continued to take an interest in the work of the institution long after his own official connection with it had been severed.

During his first four years under d'Indy Roussel wrote several works which he later destroyed, including a Quintet for horn and strings and a Violin Sonata, and his Op.2, the Piano Trio, did not appear until 1902. The subsequent years were spent in a regular routine of study, composition and teaching, and Roussel's name gradually became familiar to the musical public. His symphonic prelude Résurrection, a symphonic sketch Soir d'été (later incorporated into his First Symphony Le Poème de la Forêt), and a symphonic suite Vendanges (also destroyed), were all performed by Alfred Cortot at his enterprising series of public readings of new works, and the music critic Jean Marnold devoted a sympathetic article to him in the Mercure de France after the first performance of his suite for piano Les Rustiques, in 1906.

In 1908, his course of instruction completed, Roussel formally 'graduated' at the Schola, together with seven other pupils who had undertaken the course at

its inception, including Auguste Sérieyx, Déodat de Séverac and Marcel Labey. The occasion, a solemn one, was marked by a 'soutenance de thèse' by each candidate before a jury consisting of d'Indy, Paul Poujaud and Pierre de Bréville. Roussel spoke on 'Interpretation' and de Séverac read a paper entitled 'La centralisation et les petites chapelles en musique', in which he wittily developed a metaphor to describe the contemporary musical situation in France. Music (he said) is a temple and in the temple are two chapels, each with its officiating priest. In the right-hand chapel the priest resembles a mediaeval monk and preaches the great classical tradition, speaking of self-discipline and the progressive evolution of Art; the priest in the left-hand chapel discourses, sometimes with pathos and invariably with charm and elegance, on the love of music for music's sake alone. Both are misunderstood by their supporters as well as by their detractors. The reference was unmistakable, and nobody could fail to recognise in the two preachers the director of the Schola and the magician of Pelléas. Evidently the jury were satisfied, and all the candidates were accepted.

Thus, as far as the Schola was concerned, Roussel's apprenticeship - a long one - was over. His output,

considering that he was approaching his fortieth birthday, was not large, nor was his reputation as yet secure. Nevertheless he had tried his hand at orchestral, chamber and vocal composition, and had been fortunate in having had the opportunity of hearing his music performed under reasonable conditions. Although all these early works showed the influence of d'Indy, sometimes to a very marked degree, it was becoming evident that Roussel's attention was not exclusively focussed on the weighty sermon of the learned monk; he was casting more than sidelong glances towards the other chapel, and the more discerning might have prophesied that he would eventually turn away from both these preachers and their disciples, to build a chapel of his own in the Temple of Music.

CHAPTER II

Marriage, Travel and the Great War

The year 1908 was a mile-stone in Roussel's life for more reasons than one; on 7th April of that year he married Blanche Preisach, a Parisienne of Alsatian descent. Thrown upon his own resources at an early age, Roussel had become self-reliant to an unusual extent, and his financial position enabled him to maintain the detached relationship to the world at large which his temperament led him to prefer. He was not, however, of an unemotional nature; on the contrary, he had a profoundly rooted need for the intimate love and understanding which only the closest of family ties can bring and of which he had been deprived in his childhood. In his wife he found the ideal companion: she identified her interests with those of her husband and shared every aspect of his existence. He in turn was devoted to her and recognised the rôle she played in his creative life:

'You know what confidence I have in your musical sensitivity, and I can never tell you adequately how much your solicitude and the affectionate care you have taken for years to facilitate my work, to surround me with rest and tranquillity, have made easy the conception and the flowering of my compositions!....' (1)

(1) Bernard: op.cit., p.26.

In the following year the composer and Mme. Roussel went on a cruise lasting four months and visited, among other places, Bombay, Ellora, Jaipur and Benares in India, and Ceylon, Singapore and Saigon. This extended exploration of a region which Roussel had already visited briefly and which had always held a fascination for him, had notable consequences in his art. The immediate outcome was the composition of the Evocations, a work in the then fashionable tryptich form, each movement of which recalls a particular place he had visited in India. On its first performance in May, 1912, it was well received by the critics and the general public, and Roussel's reputation was further enhanced when his music for the ballet Le Festin de l'Araignée was given at the Théâtre des Arts in April, 1913. The ballet is based on a story by Gilbert de Voisins and was commissioned by Jacques Rouché, director of the theatre, who had already been responsible for the stage production of Ravel's suite Ma Mère l'Oye. It was only after some initial hesitation that Roussel undertook the commission, and he composed the score in a comparatively short space of time: but the work had an immediate success and has remained, for good or ill, his most popular music.

In 1914 Roussel resigned from his professorship at the Schola. He felt that his official position in an institution which was the subject of continual and embittered controversy was detrimental to his independence as a composer, and indeed he was moving steadily away from the principles of d'Indy in his composition. His deviationist tendencies had been recognised for some time, and it was more in sorrow than in anger that Blanche Selva, pupil and ardent disciple of d'Indy, wrote of Roussel's Sonatina for piano in her book La Sonate, published in 1913:

'This little work (oeuvrette) displays the composer's usual fault: the too continual harshness of the harmonic combinations and their lack of relevance to the melodic character of the theme. The first idea of the first movement is striking in this respect: the melody and the rhythm are very well conceived, but the current disease of the 'wrong note' plays havoc with the harmony. So the beauty of the whole is hardly perceptible any longer.....Despite the unquestionable talent with which this piece is written, it would be a great pity if Roussel were unable to free himself from the fashions and false ideas of the day, and lacks the energy to seek on a higher plane his justification and his goal.' (1)

If, as seems likely, this criticism, with the fundamental lack of sympathy implicit in it, was representative of the attitude of the Schola authorities

(1) Blanche Selva: La Sonate. Paris, 1913. 3rd edition, p.237.

in general, it was better for all concerned that the association should be terminated. Official or semi-official disapproval did not, however, prevent Roussel from continuing his amicable personal relations with d'Indy.

His withdrawal from the professorship must have been in some ways a loss to Roussel as well as to the Schola. During his tenure he had under his instruction such diverse talents as Roland-Manuel, Stan Golestan, Edgar Varèse and Guy de Lioncourt. But the most remarkable of his pupils was Erik Satie, who undertook the counterpoint course against the advice of Debussy and of Roussel himself, both of whom felt he had nothing to gain from it. Satie persisted and in 1906 was awarded his diploma in counterpoint, duly signed by d'Indy and Roussel, with the commendation 'très bien'. A warm friendship developed between master and pupil, which is less surprising than it might at first appear; Roussel's experience was too extensive and his judgment too impartial to allow him to be deceived by the cap and bells Satie habitually wore, and his own sense of irony was as acute as Satie's, although its manifestations were more discreetly controlled. Their musical aims and styles were totally

different, and it would be difficult to define with certainty any mutual influence; but each appreciated the other's work. Roussel's remark that Satie was 'prodigieusement musicien' has often been quoted; but it is perhaps less generally known that Satie wrote an article in the Esprit Nouveau in 1921, vigorously defending his former master against a charge of amateurism.

Although he never again taught in a musical institution, Roussel later had many private pupils, including Richardo Lopez, Bohuslav Martinu, Knudåge Riisager, Conrad Beck, Jean Martinon and the ill-fated Jean Cartan. In the memorial issue of the Revue Musicale of November, 1937, Martinu, recalling his lessons with Roussel, wrote:

'I came all the way to Paris to profit from his tuition. I arrived with my scores, my projects, with a multitudinous welter of ideas, and it was he who pointed out to me, always with sound reasoning and with a precision peculiar to himself, the path to follow, what to retain and what to reject. He succeeded in putting my thoughts in order, although I have never understood how he managed to do it. With his modesty, his kindness and his nobility of mind, and also with his subtle and friendly irony, he always led me in such a way that I was hardly aware of being led. He allowed me time to reflect and to develop by myself.....When I consider how much I learned from him, I am quite astounded. That which was hidden within me,

unconscious and unknown, he divined, revealed and strengthened in a way that was always friendly, even affectionate.

'All that I came to look for in Paris I found in him, and in addition his friendship has always been a valuable stimulant. What I sought in him were order, clarity, restraint, discernment and direct, exact and sensitive expression - those qualities inherent in French art which I have ever admired and with which I desired a more intimate acquaintance. He did, in fact, possess all these qualities, and he freely imparted his knowledge to me, simply and easily, like the great artist he was.'(1)

Throughout his career Roussel gave sympathy and practical encouragement not only to his own pupils, but to every young musician deserving of them.

After the success of Le Festin, Roussel did not have to wait long before an opportunity arose for him to embark upon a work of much greater scope. Rouché was appointed director of the Théâtre National de l'Opéra in 1914 and, determined to enlarge the limited contemporary repertoire, commissioned Roussel to write a lyric drama. After some consideration the composer chose for his theme the Hindu legend of Padmâvatî, Queen of Tchitor. Louis Laloy, the distinguished orientalist, undertook the libretto, and the score was complete, except for some orchestration, when war broke out and plans for performance had to

(1) La Revue Musicale, November, 1937, p.366.

time, the balance of Roussel's personality. His intellectual ability and his emotional responsiveness, his cool appraisal of reality and his burning idealism, his need for independence and his profound personal commitment - all of these characteristics were, like his love of music and of the sea, not contradictory but complementary, not mutually destructive but integrated and self-adjusting.

Looking to the days ahead, Roussel realised that the war had put an end to an epoch, and that the post-war world would be based on new promises and would demand a new orientation of outlook:

'All that' (their life before the war) 'will belong to 'pre-war things', that is to say to things which will be separated from us by a wall, a veritable wall....It will be necessary to begin living all over again, with a new conception of life; this is not to say that all that was done before the war will be forgotten, but rather that everything done subsequently will be done in a different way. I was thinking about this yesterday and wondering whether I ought not to fear the new attitude of mind which will result from the present crisis, with reference to Padmâvatî, conceived and composed in its entirety before the war. All things considered, I do not think so. I cannot see in my work any traces of morbid or deliquescent influences. On the contrary, it seems to me that the general tone is virile and strong and that it will be able to survive the test of two or three years' delay (and what years!) before its presentation to the public.'(1)

His lack of contact with music and the absence of

(1) Bernard: op.cit., p.31.

be postponed.

Roussel had been removed from the navy reserve list in 1902 for health reasons, but he made strenuous and persistent efforts to be allowed to re-enlist: eventually he obtained a commission in the artillery and served as transport officer at Verdun. The separation was a painful one for the composer and his wife, but it was in part alleviated by their regular correspondence. The time has not yet come for a full publication of these letters; but the extracts from them which have already appeared in print reveal more vividly than any commentary the quality of his character and the clarity and integrity of his thought.

Like every sensitive individual involved in the frightful holocaust of the first World War, he was deeply moved, and often sickened, by what he saw:

'As I was leaving the car, a regiment passed through the town, led by a band, on their way to the trenches. It made an unforgettable impression on me. The men, mere youths, marched boldly, looking serious and resolute, while the band set the pace with the strains of the 'Song of Farewell'. Then, after some fanfares, they struck up that well-known tune 'To die for one's country is the noblest fate of all'. You cannot imagine the effect of this song played while these men were filing past, aware of the dangers they were going to face several hours later. Never will I forget the emotion caused by this calm and sublime march to death; it was most moving.

This incident reminded me of another, even more tragic; the departure of that regiment quartered at La Pépinière, which you will remember.....with the standard-bearer holding pressed against the shaft a lovely rose of France. Where is he now? and where are all those fine lads who set out then, so full of spirit?'(1)

But even this war had its lighter moments, and Roussel's sense of humour remained intact. His description of the following incident, with its restrained and unselfconscious irony, free of malice, is typical:

'Yesterday I had a moment of quiet amusement. Captain de M., my immediate superior, had summoned us for the report which is made every five days (I had presented myself to him the previous day). After he had introduced me to some lieutenants who were there, he went on: "I might allow myself to add, at the risk of offending the modesty of our colleague' (I said to myself: what's he going to come out with?), 'that Lt. Roussel is a distinguished music-lover (mélomane)'. I bowed, without smiling, and his hearers looked at me with mild curiosity. This captain is a typically decent old chap, very likable....'(2)

Although he was quite clear as to where his own duty lay, and went to great lengths to be allowed to perform it, he was not prepared to join in the popular clamour for a 'settling of accounts' after the war:

'G.C. hopes that after the war a very clear distinction will be made between 'those who took part' and the rest, 'in order to

(1) Bernard: op.cit., p.43.

(2) Bernard: op.cit., p.35.

throw the latter in a heap and without discrimination into the refuse-bin'. That is perhaps a little hard, and patriotism is not, after all, a guarantee of adequate talent! As for myself, I don't give a d___ about all that!'(1)

Nor was his musical judgment influenced by patriotic considerations:

'I have just read in Le Temps of yesterday evening an article by P.M., dedicated to the conscripts of 1917, which, besides some very sensible things, includes a passage that has really exasperated me. He is speaking of the romance of Tristan and Yseult 'which this inspired and lamentably garrulous Wagner has massacred in order to turn it into sadistic and disordered nonsense'. Really, I think we've had enough of the impertinence of the litterati. First M.D., then M.M., and now here is another drivelling idiot who is absolutely set on making the French look like cretins in the eyes of the foreigner. Is there no way of silencing these false patriots? There are leagues against pornography, against the abuse of tobacco, against all sorts of things, some of them innocent enough. Could one not be launched against the ignorance and idiocy of writers? My hand trembles as I write this to you, and it is with anger, and helpless anger, because we must believe that these people will always be in the right in a country which shows an almost total lack of interest in music, and where quick popularity is gained by pandering to the baser passions, to envy and cupidity....Ah! it may indeed be said that if the war has uplifted the souls and strengthened the characters of those who take part in it, it has sadly exposed the vices and petty nastiness of those who do not.

'My poor darling, forgive me for being unable to contain my irritation at something which I should simply let pass with contempt. You know me and you know how it upsets me when I read

(1) Bernard: op.cit., p.44.

anything so disgusting and in such bad faith. But do not be alarmed; indignation will give place once more to philosophy and, despite all this, works of beauty will remain and false artists will disappear....'(1)

This passionate outburst, and the strength of feeling behind it, might have surprised some who, misled in his lifetime by Roussel's manner in public, saw his self-control as lack of energy and his reserve as indifference. Where his own personal reputation was concerned, Roussel was indeed indifferent; he abhorred cheap publicity and never made any effort to push his own music before that of others, even when he was in a position to do so without incurring criticism. Incapable of synthetic indignation, he was, however, acutely sensitive when justice to others was in question, and was always roused by deceit, insincerity or unnecessary brutality. Years later, when he involuntarily witnessed the pointless shooting of sea-birds during a transatlantic crossing, he wrote in a white fury:

'Whether it be on dry land or between the waters and the heavens, wherever there are men, there is stupidity, beastliness and blood!'(2)

In spite of the daily preoccupations of his military duties, he still found time to meditate on his

(1) Bernard: op.cit., p.42.

(2) Hoérée: Albert Roussel, p.117.

art, and on the wider impact of the war upon men's lives and characters, with its implications for the future:

'How happy I am to think that music has the power to transport you out of every-day existence and to lead you back to hope, to love of life, to everything within us that is great, beautiful and super-human. Yes indeed, music, with poetry, and perhaps even more than poetry, is the supreme art, for it has the power of transfiguration, and speaks to those who love, and to those who, in the words of Saint Augustine, 'love to love'. And love is the mainspring of the universe. You will think that my letter is very lyrical and high-flown, but, you see, the life that we lead here inculcates eventually a very special mental outlook. You are constantly coming up against the crudest matter-of-factness and the most amazing idealism (when you have learned how to separate it from the circumstantial detail). You live by an almost complete materialism and you suddenly notice at your side naked heroism and words and acts whose antique grandeur inspires wonderment. Then, when you reflect a little and when you remain, as I do, a little apart in order to have the freedom of personal vision, you feel, rising up and growing within you, a great wave of idealism which will be for many the main benefit of this horrible war and which will outlast it, we must hope. All these forces which the war has unleashed will combine and will be condensed in the works of peace and in every manifestation of artistic thought. There will be fine days again, my darling, and radiant springs for those whose hearts are still young and who can express their feelings, and I know that you are too valiant, too 'tempered', not to bear courageously the weeks of cruel separation which are wounding us both.

'Whenever you feel too sad or lonely, ask C. or Z. to sing you some lovely song by Duparc or Fauré or Schumann; listen again to that wonderful Woman's Life and Love which Z. sang for us at

Belle-Isle; ask J. for some of the songs of Schubert, which she would interpret so well, and you will feel rejuvenated and comforted once again.' (1)

As well as testifying to the catholicity of Roussel's taste and understanding, and to his enthusiasm for the music of others (a trait not found in every professional composer), this letter reveals his noble conception of the nature and power of his art; on a subsequent occasion he formulated this conception more succinctly when he wrote:

'The cult of spiritual values is at the base of every society which claims to be civilised, and music, among the arts, is its most sensitive and sublime expression.' (2)

This was for Roussel more than an aesthetic theory; it was the guiding philosophy of his life. He was, in a literal sense, dedicated to his art, proud of his vocation and conscious of its responsibilities, so that towards the end of his career he could say with perfect sincerity:

'My sole aim has been to serve my art, by giving clear expression to my thoughts. I hope that I have succeeded in this, for that is the only reward I desire.' (3)

The letter quoted above is, moreover, remarkable for its indication of the complexity and, at the same

(1) Bernard: op.cit., p.17.

(2) Catalogue de l'Oeuvre d'Albert Roussel: Frontispiece.

(3) Hoérée: op.cit., p.116.

intellectual activity from his life made him anticipate eagerly a resumption of composition after the war:

'I no longer hope for the end of the war before the spring of 1918, but it seems to me reasonable to suppose that it will be over some time about then....I shall finish the orchestration of Padmavati, if, as I fear, I have not been able to do so before then, and I shall start at once upon something else, a symphony for orchestra alone, without chorus, and another symphony with chorus which I should like to write and which I have been thinking about for a long time: Le Poème des Eaux, or Le Poème de la Mer. With these two works, and then Le Roi Tobol to begin afresh, I shall have work enough for ten years! (1)

In the spring of 1918 there were still bitter days ahead for France; but Roussel's part in the struggle had ended, for his state of health in January of that year made his final retirement obligatory. He rejoined his wife and went to Perros-Guirec on the Brittany coast to convalesce; and there he completed the score of Padmavati.

(1) Bernard: op.cit. , p.32.

CHAPTER III

Vasterival

Roussel did not carry out his expressed intention of completing his opera Le Roi Tobol, begun before the war on a text by Jean-Louis Vaudoyer. After brushing up his technique by writing several minor compositions, including the Impromptu for harp, the piece for piano entitled Doute, and the songs Light, A Farewell, Sarabande and Le Bachelier de Salamanque, he started work on his Second Symphony, in Eb. Begun in July 1919 at Cap Brun, near Toulon, its progress was interrupted by the composer's ill-health, and the score was not finally established until 1921.

In that year Roussel acquired a property in Vasterival, at Varengeville on the Normandy coast, which thereafter became his summer residence. The villa was set on a tree-covered height overlooking the promontory of Ailly and the sea. The importance of Vasterival as a background to the composer's work has been rightly stressed by his biographers. Roussel, unlike many composers, was acutely sensitive to his surroundings: natural beauty, calm and order stimulated and were, indeed, essential to his creative activity. At Vasterival the sea in its

transient moods, the rocky and indented coastline, the nearby wood to which he used to retire to work, the richly cultivated garden; the freedom from the distractions of life in the metropolis and from the importunities of unwelcome visitors; the domestic orderliness and regularity ensured by the tactful supervision of Mme. Roussel: all these contributed to create an atmosphere which was most congenial to Roussel and favourable to his production.

His regular routine has been described by Arthur Hoérée, a frequent visitor at Vasterival. Rising early, Roussel spent some time at the piano - significantly, his favourite composers were Bach and Chopin - or applied himself to the study and solution of mathematical problems. His preoccupation with mathematics recalls that of his great contemporary, Paul Valéry, and, like the poet, Roussel was attracted to the most abstract of all intellectual pursuits by its formal beauty and the purity of its logic. But his interest in science was not confined to mathematics; in many fields of culture his knowledge was profound and extensive.

Thereafter the mornings were devoted entirely to composition, and the rest of the day was spent

either in further work or in relaxation in the open air. In the winter months Roussel returned to Paris or travelled abroad.

This undramatic existence was nevertheless a fruitful one, and the twenties saw a steady flow of new works and an ever-widening appreciation of the composer's talents.

In October 1921 the symphonic poem Pour une Fête de printemps was given its first performance, and was followed by the Second Symphony in March 1922; the long-delayed staging of Padmâvatî took place at the Paris Opera on 1st June 1923. Although none of these works was received with unanimous praise, their importance was universally acknowledged, and Roussel's position and standing as a composer had to be reassessed. The Hellenic fantasy La Naissance de la Lyre was performed at the Opera in July 1925, and in the same year the second Violin Sonata and the Sérénade for flute, harp and string trio were played at the Paris Festival of the Société Musicale Indépendante, which Roussel had supported from its inception.

Abroad his reputation was steadily growing as his music became more generally familiar. His name figured on the programmes of the first festivals:

organised by the International Society for Contemporary Music; the Divertissement was performed at Salzburg in August 1923, the Second Symphony at Prague in June 1924, and the Joueurs de Flûte at the Venice Festival in September 1925. The Roussel programme of the S.M.I. Festival mentioned above was repeated privately in London some weeks later.

Nor was this reputation confined to Europe. The conductor Serge Koussevitsky had expressed the warmest admiration for Roussel's Second Symphony, and the composer dedicated to him his next orchestral work, the Suite in F. The Boston Symphony Orchestra, under Koussevitsky, gave the suite its world première in January 1927, in Boston, and performed it again five months later in Paris, where the Concert for small orchestra had been heard a fortnight previously.

In 1928 Le Bardit des Francs for male chorus was given in Strasburg and on 7th June the Piano Concerto was performed in Paris under Koussevitsky, with Alexandre Borovsky as the soloist.

On the occasion of Roussel's sixtieth birthday, in April 1929, a Semaine Roussel was organised in Paris in his honour, and four concerts were pre-

sented, covering every aspect of his composition. Among the new works heard were two movements, the Aubade and the Mascarade, of the still incomplete Petite Suite, and the setting of Psalm 80 for chorus and orchestra. Le Festin de l'Araignée was successfully revived at the Opéra Comique, and a special number of the Revue Musicale was devoted to the composer.

By now Roussel was the outstanding French composer of the older generation. Saint-Saëns, Fauré, Debussy and Satie were dead; d'Indy had virtually retired from composition, Ravel's production was intermittent, and Florent Schmitt had not fulfilled his earlier promise. Roussel, on the other hand, was reaping a rich and apparently inexhaustible harvest. It was fitting, therefore, that Koussevitsky should invite him to compose a work for the fiftieth anniversary celebrations of the Boston Symphony Orchestra. The outcome of this commission was the Third Symphony, in G minor, which is thus in the distinguished company of two other works written for the same occasion, Stravinsky's Symphony of Psalms and Honegger's Symphony. The composer and his wife travelled to America for the first performance; this took place on 17th October

1930 in Boston. The enthusiastic reception accorded to the symphony was repeated when it was given in Paris in the following year.

The presentation of the ballet Bacchus et Ariane at the Opera in May 1931 ensured that Roussel's reputation as a composer for the theatre was not less than his fame as a symphonist. In the same year his international stature was recognised by the Academy of Saint Cecilia in Rome, which conferred on him honorary membership, in company with Hindemith, Kodály and Georges Enesco. Two years later he was the only Frenchman to be awarded the Brahms Centenary Medal, by the Senate of Hamburg.

Another event of 1931 was Roussel's visit to England to attend the first British performance of Psalm 80, one of the principal attractions of the ninth I.S.C.M. Festival. Roussel had a considerable knowledge of English - he had chosen to set his music to the English text of the psalm - and a sincere admiration for this country's culture and customs. Psalm 80 was given by the B.B.C. chorus and orchestra in the Queen's Hall on 28th July, and was warmly received, although it came at the end of a mammoth programme of unfamiliar music.

The next five years saw no relaxation of effort. Outstanding among the works of this last period are the String Quartet, the operetta Le Testament de Tante Caroline, the Fourth Symphony, the ballet Aenéas, the Rapsodie Flamande and the 'Cello Concertino. But Roussel was battling against recurrent ill-health. He suffered from a serious attack of pneumonia in the winter of 1933-34, and his condition was aggravated by the shock caused by a violent and widespread forest fire which threatened to destroy Vasterival in August 1935. His interest in the music of younger composers had led to his undertaking some professional commitments which further taxed his strength. He was appointed president of the music section of the Paris International Exhibition, in addition to being a member of the French committee of the I.S.C.M., and in the autumn of 1936, in spite of his increasing weakness, he attended personally to the organisation of the exhibition and of the 1937 I.S.C.M. Festival, reading all the scores submitted. It was typical of him that he refused to allow his own Fourth Symphony to be played, on the grounds that this would deprive some younger and less well-known musician of a place on the programme. In the spring of 1937, exhausted,

he returned to Vasterival, and there completed his String Trio. But the Normandy climate was judged to be too severe for him and he had to leave the place which had for so long been his home. He wrote to René Dumesnil:

'We have said a final sad farewell to our beloved Vasterival, to the woods and the meadows, to the happy life we created there and which we must now leave behind..... And now we do not know whither to turn our steps, for the country without the sea has no appeal for me, and the Côte d'Azur is too hot at this time of year. A spot on the coast, near Royan, well sheltered from the wind, has been strongly recommended to me, and perhaps we shall undertake the journey there at the end of this month.' (1)

He went to Royan, accompanied by his wife; but his condition continued to deteriorate.

On 23rd August 1937, he died.

On 27th August, in accordance with his own wishes, he was buried in the little cemetery of Varengeville, within earshot of the sea -

'La mer, la mer, toujours recommencée.....'

(1) Bernard: op.cit., p.52.

CHAPTER IV

The Music: A General Introduction

A brief consideration of the general nature and scope of Roussel's music reveals an oeuvre which is substantial without being remarkably large, consisting of some sixty opus numbers, of which about half might fairly be called major works. Although he contributed something to almost every category of musical composition, Roussel rarely repeated himself in any one medium or form: so, for example, he wrote one opera-ballet, one operetta, one large-scale work for chorus and orchestra, one piano concerto, one string quartet, one string trio and one piano sonatina. The most obvious exceptions to this general rule - the symphonies, the ballets and the songs - are special cases by reason of the central place of these forms in musical development; and even here the works are distinct in character one from another. Roussel's output is spread widely and thinly.

Such a combination of diversity and economy cannot be regarded as fortuitous. Roussel was free to compose as and when he wished, subject to no external pressures, financial or professional, and so the channels into which he guided his creative energies were deliberately selected, and their choice is a direct

consequence of his personal attitude to the practice of composition. This attitude was determined, in part at least, by the circumstances of his formative years. Coming late to the study of music, he lacked not only the fluency of writing which an early training in compositional techniques would have given him, but also that proficiency as an instrumentalist which has enabled many composers to find an almost immediate formulation for their creative impulses. Yet he could not afford, in view of his delayed start, to allow an individual style to emerge slowly from a mass of derivative work; it was essential that each composition should represent a step - a step forward, to the side, or even, if necessary, backward - in his evolution.

Fortunately, he was temperamentally equipped to overcome his initial handicaps. His capacity for detachment and self-criticism enabled him to regard each work not merely as an independent artistic creation, but also as a solution to some specific problem of expression. If the solution were satisfactory, he had no inclination to reproduce it to pattern, but moved at once to some other field of endeavour, absorbing into his technique what he considered important

and personal and rejecting those elements which were superfluous or derivative. So there is throughout his work a progressive development from the early apprentice compositions to the masterpieces of the final period. The continuity of this development has not always been recognised: critics have been misled by the variety in Roussel's music, which has made comparisons difficult, and by his constant adaptation of his technique to meet the special requirements of the particular medium in which he happened to be working. Consequently he has been accused of inconsistency. Roussel himself rejected this charge when he wrote to Arthur Hoérée, after the publication of the latter's penetrating article on his music in the Revue Musicale of April 1929:

'Your article in the Revue Musicale has given me great pleasure, for up to the present it has seemed that, so far as the critics were concerned, my music could not be analysed and was founded on an absolutely arbitrary empiricism. But I had excellent reasons for believing the contrary. The study you have made of it will help to correct the misunderstanding which some have been careful to maintain.....'(1)

The first stage in his development is seen in

(1) Hoérée : op.cit., p.87.

the group of works written under the tutelage of d'Indy, which includes three major compositions, the Piano Trio, the First Symphony and the first Violin Sonata. In all of these Roussel follows the structural methods of d'Indy; all employ cyclic forms, and in each one the basic material is incapable of supporting the vast erection imposed upon it. Nevertheless, even in these works there is evidence of Roussel's persistent struggle towards a personal means of expression. It is in his freer treatment of harmony and melody rather than in any formal experiments that his originality first becomes evident, and in these respects his imagination was undoubtedly stimulated by the idiom of Debussy.

It is all too easy to take a one-sided view of d'Indy's technique - to lay stress upon the inflated rhetoric, the cold formalism, the too mechanical reliance on unifying and extensive devices in his larger works, and to overlook the rhythmic vigour, the melodic freshness and the textural clarity of his less pretentious music. If d'Indy's influence must be held responsible for the weaknesses of Roussel's more ambitious attempts at this stage, it must also be credited with setting him on what was to turn out

to be his own true path of development. The extent of Roussel's indebtedness to d'Indy's example in the composition of his Divertissement for piano and wind instruments will be discussed later: here it is sufficient to point out that this is the first important work in which Roussel establishes authoritatively his own musical personality. The form and medium, with their imperative demand for wit and brevity, were much more congenial to his temperament than were the monumental edifices of the Schola, and Roussel responded superbly to their challenge, producing a score of real distinction. The same distinction characterises the Deux poèmes chinois, where the elegant grace and restrained emotion of the Chinese lyrics inspired the composer to a more completely individual utterance than had the pallid symbolism of the Henri de Régnier poems he had previously set.

An increasing realisation of the nature of his talent was drawing Roussel away from the confined orbit of the Schola, and in the years following 1908 he undertook an investigation into the aesthetic and technique implicit in the Divertissement, which bore fruit in the two 'Impressionist' masterpieces, the Evocations (1910-11) and Le Festin de l'Araignée* (1913).

The term 'Impressionist', like every other artistic classification, has a limited usefulness and an almost unlimited potentiality for obscuring genuine and important distinctions. It has been applied indiscriminately to such diverse works as Pelléas, Daphnis et Chloë, Jour d'été à la montagne, and La Péri, whose highest common factor is their extra-musical inspiration and which are as truly individual as are the paintings of Monet and Renoir, Degas and Cézanne. It would be a mistake, therefore, to expect Roussel's 'Impressionist' stage to be nothing more than an exchange of the discipline of d'Indy for that of Debussy. In fact, his contribution to this particular artistic tendency is a uniquely personal one, and its singularity derives from the manner in which he reacted to his chosen subjects. His attitude to the world around him was neither purely moralistic, like d'Indy's, nor primarily sensuous, as was Debussy's, but was more complex than either. He was very acutely sensitive in his response to external and particularly to natural stimuli, as his correspondence shows; at the same time his intellectual curiosity led him to observe and to study his own reactions to these stimuli. So his 'Impressionist' music is the outcome of genuinely

experienced emotion, not merely recollected in tranquillity, but dispassionately analysed as well. This gives it a curiously bi-focal effect peculiar to the composer, which would come close to irony were it not for his manifest sincerity of purpose.

In the Evocations and Le Festin he found two subjects eminently suited to his genius. The Evocations, as their title implies, were not intended to create an oriental atmosphere by pseudo-oriental means, - as were Rimsky-Korsakov's Schéhérazade and Dukas' La Péri - but rather to evoke the East as it appeared to a sympathetic but uncommitted European onlooker. The same detachment characterises Le Festin. Roussel was not the first to use the insect-world as a frame for an objective expression of essentially human drama, and in this work he painted with a delicacy worthy of La Fontaine a wide range of emotions, while remaining an impartial and Brobdingnagian observer of this magical universe in miniature.

The harmonic language of both these works (and of the Suite (op.14) and the Sonatina for piano) is derived from that of the Divertissement, and its chief features are: the use of altered chords, especially with a flattened fifth; the substitution of fourth for third

in the chord structure; the avoidance of perfect cadences; and an extensive use of pedal - and ostinato - figures. There is a preference for clear and positive melodic lines, and continuous rhythms. Despite these overall similarities of technique it is, however, true (as Mr. Mellers points out⁽¹⁾) that the later work, Le Festin, marks the end of a phase of development, and the Evocations the beginning of a new one, if only because in this instance Roussel turns to the East for the source of his inspiration. The influence of Hindu music and dance on Roussel's later style has often been discussed and perhaps on occasion over-emphasised. It is certain that what he saw and heard on his visit to the East in 1909 made a strong and lasting impression on him; but Mr. Mellers reminds us that even in his earliest works Roussel shows 'a certain exoticism of imagination' - an exoticism which expresses itself in his avoidance of harmonic conventionality. The modal variety of oriental scales undoubtedly encouraged him to apply to his own music the freedom of chromatic alteration which aroused Blanche Selva's disapprobation. But, except when making direct allusions in the two works of oriental inspiration, he did not

(1) W.H. Mellers: *Studies in Contemporary Music: Albert Roussel and La Musique Française*, p. 79 (note).

attempt any systematic application of Hindu melodic or rhythmic modes, and his music remained entirely European both in idiom and in spirit.

In his next major composition, Padmâvatî, Roussel was concerned to give a more direct and dramatic expression to the East, and correspondingly carried still further his melodic and harmonic chromaticism. The resultant rugged angularity of harmony and melody combine with an increased rhythmic energy to form a highly individual style, at once complex and elliptic, harsh and powerful.

The first large-scale works to be written after his return to composition in 1918 - the symphonic poem Pour une Fête de printemps, and the Second Symphony - show that the impact of the war did not compel him to change his direction in any fundamental respect; in both of these works he adapted the technique of Padmâvatî to purely instrumental forms, and in some respects intensified his expression. Bi-tonality, sometimes implied but never explicitly stated in his pre-war work, is aggressively presented as an important compositional element by the very opening of Pour une Fête de printemps, and plays a significant rôle in the Second Symphony. The counterpoint is more

involved than in the earlier works, and the purely sensuous factors in his style, already reduced in Padmâvatî, are now even more ruthlessly eliminated.

It was the uncompromising starkness of these works, and the complexity and violence of their language, which led to accusations of amateur clumsiness or, worse, of deliberate perversity, being levelled at their composer. Such charges were ill-founded. Roussel was too competent a musician to be guilty of elementary clumsiness, and too sincere an artist to indulge in perversity for its own sake; his expression is complex because the nature of his artistic vision is complex. Nevertheless, he himself became aware of the danger of excessive introspection, and of the need to present his ideas in a more directly accessible form. He admitted on reflection that his Second Symphony was 'too hermetic', and in 1929 wrote:

'Was this symphony a lesson to me? From that time onwards, without abandoning the principle of development conducted according to the logic of the idea and the intimate meaning of the work, I envisaged a style which would be more pruned, more distilled, more schematised. This orientation of my thought resulted in the Suite in F, the Concert for small orchestra, and, just recently, the Piano Concerto. I believe I have adopted in these works a clearer style, the outcome of a more completely personal research, directed towards

the realisation of pure music.'(1)

This reference to 'pure music' is expanded in the well-known statement of the following year:

'What I should like to achieve is music which is self-contained, music which is divorced from any illustrative or descriptive elements and is free from any localisation in space....Far from wishing to write descriptive music, I constantly try to obliterate from my mind the memory of objects and forms capable of being translated into musical terms. I want my music to be nothing but music.' (2)

Thus the Second Symphony marks the final turning-point in Roussel's evolution. In the peaceful atmosphere of Vasterival, with the experiences of the war taking their place in the perspective of the past, he had arrived at a fully conscious awareness of the artistic ideals towards which he had been moving all his life. Moreover, he had recognised and guarded against the temptation to which he was particularly exposed by temperament and circumstance - that of artistic solipsism. The task of putting his ideals into practice remained, and it was to this that he devoted the rest of his career. From the Suite in F onwards his style does not alter in any fundamental respect, but it becomes, in his own words, 'more pruned, more distilled, more schematized'.

(1) Hoérée: op.cit., p.80.

(2) Hoérée: op.cit., p.66.

This final phase has been referred to as his 'neo-classical' period. Like 'Impressionism', 'Neo-classicism' has had many connotations and has been used to describe many different musical styles. At the most superficial level it indicates a return to the 'classical' forms and media of the 18th century, and in this sense it may indeed be applied to Roussel's last period. In its less specialised significance it suggests a generalisation of individual experience expressed mainly through formal and architectural relationships within a commonly accepted idiom, and, by extension, has come to imply the rejection of personal emotional expression as a factor in artistic creation, as can be seen from the pronouncements of the leading 'neo-classical' artists. In his book A Composer's World, Hindemith asserts:

'Music cannot express the composer's feelings',⁽¹⁾
and Stravinsky says in his autobiography:

'I consider that music is, by its very nature, essentially powerless to express anything at all, whether a feeling, an attitude of mind, a psychological mood, a phenomenon of nature etc.....Expression has never been an inherent property of music'.⁽²⁾

Consequently both these composers have, at some stage

(1) P. Hindemith: A Composer's World. Cambridge, Mass. 1952, p. 35.

(2) I. Stravinsky: Chronicle of my life: London (English translation) 1936; p.91.

in their development, attempted to eliminate the elements of personal expression from their music - Hindemith by basing his technique on acoustic principles of universal validity, Stravinsky by founding his on universally accepted styles and artistic conventions. How far they have succeeded in their aim, and indeed whether it was desirable that they should do so, is a matter outside the scope of this study.

Roussel, on the other hand, held that music could be, and was, the vehicle for the direct communication of human feeling, and that a work of art was a personal expression of its creator, although he did not believe that what was thus expressed could be narrowly defined in non-musical terms, as the following quotation will show:

'Programmatic compositions and descriptive symphonic poems seem to be increasingly neglected in favour of the classical forms, where music reigns alone; must this fact be interpreted as a sign that music will be inexpressive or devoid of emotion? It would be absurd to claim that the sensibility of the musician will no longer play a part in his composition. (The word 'sensibility' must not, of course, be understood to mean 'pity', 'kindness' or 'fragility', but rather responsiveness to all the impressions which come to him from nature - and here I use the word 'nature' in its widest and most general sense.)

On the contrary, it is this sensibility which will transform the material of sound and will give it that inner radiance which is the unmistakable hall-mark of the chosen artist.

'But the expression will remain inherent in the pattern of the music. The listener is at liberty to interpret and translate as he will the unfolding of the musical sounds. After the recent performance of a work, about which its composer had stated categorically that it had not been inspired by any extra-musical idea, a critic, in a favourable article, protested against this claim, affirming that 'the performance of this work had aroused in him impressions of gaiety, of rhythmic frenzy....that he had seen iridescent mists...sensed the freshness of clear water...etc.' This was a simple misunderstanding. It is not a composer's business to forbid his hearers to feel or to see this or that. For the language of music, by its very imprecision, produces different reactions according to the natures of those to whom it is addressed. But it is only when no consideration unconnected with the harmonious ordering of sounds preoccupies the mind of the composer that music is able to reveal to those who love her for her own sake the secret of her beauty and the full extent of her power.'(1)

So Roussel's adoption of the classical forms was not a consequence of a desire to reduce the 'expressive' content of his music, but simply a means of escape from the programmatic and pictorial associations which have for so long been a sine qua non for the French composer if he was to engage the sympathy of

(1) Bernard: op.cit., p.122.

his public and critics. Far from being generalised, Roussel's language became even more idiosyncratic, and in the best of these works the exteriorisation of his thought is balanced by a hitherto unequalled interior tension, making the music a highly individual expression of personal emotion.

Any résumé of the technique employed in this later music is bound to be incomplete, if not misleading, because of its intricacy and the variety of ways in which it is applied. Nevertheless certain broad features may be noted here, subject to subsequent modification in individual cases. It is in his formal treatment that the full extent of Roussel's 'schematization' is apparent. In his handling of the classical binary and ternary, sonata and rondo forms, he does not attempt to transform them, but rather emphasises their principal characteristics; so, for example, his first and second subjects are always clearly differentiated. On the other hand he rarely re-states his material without alteration or embellishment of harmony, counterpoint or instrumentation. The music is predominantly tonal, although he does not exclude the use of bi-tonality under certain conditions. Nevertheless, he allows himself the

utmost licence of chromatic substitution within a tonal area. His chord structures are complicated by alterations and replacements, appoggiaturas and auxiliary notes, and the harmony is further intensified by the presence of extraneous pedals. His melodic style ranges from the long modally-inflected curves of his slow movements to the succinct diatonic phrases of some of his scherzi and finales, with their flavour of the folk-song or popular chanson. His rhythms are varied, but are subordinated to a constant metre. In his phrase structure he uses both regularity and irregularity according to circumstances.

It will be the purpose of the succeeding chapters to expand and, where necessary, to qualify the general observations made in this introduction, in the light of a detailed examination of the individual works.

CHAPTER V

The Symphonies

It is hardly surprising that the symphony has not flourished in France, as the national genius inclines to the episodic and decorative rather than to the structural and abstract. The symphonies of Berlioz might more properly be described as tone-poems, because their form is largely determined by their extra-musical programme. Those of Saint-Saëns, Lalo and Bizet are all more or less pale imitations of Teutonic models. César Franck and his pupil Chausson were only partially successful as symphonic writers; they did not realise that repetition does not always constitute development, and so their work lacks the logical growth essential to a symphony. Vincent d'Indy, to his great credit, was the first French composer to arrive at an understanding of the principles inherent in the symphonies of Beethoven, and to attempt to apply them in his own composition; but a knowledge of formal principles and a plausible theory of the expressive significance of modulation will not in themselves guarantee creative success in music, any more than a command of grammar and an awareness of the emotive values of phonetic sounds will automatically produce works of literary merit,

and d'Indy's Symphony in Bb is no more great music than Poe's The Raven is great poetry. His best symphony is his earliest and least ambitious one, the Symphonie cévenole, in which he makes full use of his limited but genuine lyric talent. Dukas' symphony, technically efficient though it is, does not rise above academic respectability.

Paradoxically, it was left to a musician who was considered by the orthodox to be incapable of sustained musical thought to compose the finest symphony written by any French composer before 1914. Debussy's La Mer displays, despite its programmatic headings and the evident source of its inspiration, all the essential features of the symphony; it has coherence, logical development and, moreover, the one quality lacking in d'Indy's and Dukas' efforts, namely, the originality of genius.

It is against this background of conflicting tendencies and irregular and individual attainment that we must set the work of Roussel, and it is in keeping with the sporadic appearance of this form in French musical history that he should come to write his first symphony almost by accident. It originated in two independent symphonic sketches, Soir d'été

and Renouveau, composed in 1904 and 1905 respectively. In 1906 Roussel wrote an introductory prelude, Forêt d'hiver, and a rondo, Faunes et Dryades, and in 1908 collected the four movements under the general title Le Poème de la Forêt. Although Soir d'été was played as early as 1904 by Cortot, the complete work received its first performance in Brussels in 1908 and was not heard in Paris until the following year. Its date of appearance is therefore misleading, as it was in fact contemporaneous with La Mer and d'Indy's Jour d'été à la montagne, and with them makes up the trio of French musical nature studies. In intention and achievement it is, as might be expected, closer to d'Indy than to Debussy. Like the Jour d'été à la montagne, its descriptive aim is to present a complete natural cycle. Forêt d'hiver depicts the barren desolation of a winter landscape, which gradually comes to life again with the return of spring in Renouveau. Soir d'été evokes the drowsy warmth of a summer evening, and the subsequent vigorous and presumably autumnal revels of the Faunes et Dryades are ended by the inevitable onset of winter. In its musical structure, too, the

Poème owes much to d'Indy; each movement is written in a classical form as taught at the Schola - introduction, sonata-form, ternary adagio and rondo finale - and there is the usual emergent and recurrent cyclic theme.

It is easy enough to see the weaknesses in the work, which are largely due to its disconnected origins and its composer's inexperience. The style is inconsistent, there are redundancies and plagiarisms - the latter from Wagner as well as from d'Indy - and the whole suffers from a lack of unity barely mitigated by the final reappearance of the opening material. On the other hand, there is also much worthy of admiration, suggesting an original musical personality striving after an adequate vehicle of expression. In spite of his debt to d'Indy, Roussel departs in some essentials from the practice of his teacher. Significantly, he avoids extended rhetorical climaxes, thereby incurring d'Indy's criticism,⁽¹⁾ while his abrupt modulation in the final coda and subsequent graceful return to the principal tonality is entirely personal. The melodic line is on the whole undistinguished, although

⁽¹⁾ Bernard: op.cit., p.94.

a phrase like the following is original in its wide spacing and sharp angularity (Ex. 1).

In his harmony Roussel enlarges the somewhat exiguous vocabulary of the Schola, and in doing so does not hesitate to seek inspiration in the opposite musical camp. Ex. 2 is almost symbolic in its combination of d'Indy's favourite augmented fifth chord and Debussy's ninths. The borrowings from Debussy are, however, selective and carefully assimilated, and it is noteworthy that in this extract the chords are linked by the pedal E. Roussel is not interested in the anti-tonal aspects of Debussy's technique, and neither here nor elsewhere does he use the whole-tone scale.

Even more characteristic in its flavour is the progression from Soir d'été shown in Ex. 3. The complication of the harmony by means of chromatic substitution, inner pedals and ellipses, of which this is a good example, was to become a hall-mark of Roussel's later style.

Interesting though some of the harmony is, it is above all the rhythmic vitality of the work that is its most promising feature; the coda of Renouveau, with its aggressively insistent rhythmic figure,

and the impetus which characterises Faunes et Dryades, are prophetic of the composer's future line of development. The orchestration shows the skill to be expected in a pupil of d'Indy, one of the outstanding conductors of his generation; it is very well calculated without being strongly individual.

In spite of its unevenness, therefore, the symphony is by no means devoid of merit; and it might be said with a special appropriateness in this case that the interest of the several trees compensates in large measure for the deficiencies in the overall view of the wood.

The Second Symphony, in Bb major, is a work of very different calibre. It was composed between 1919 and 1921 and given its first performance in 1922 by the Pasdeloup orchestra under their conductor Rhené-Bâton, to whom it is dedicated. Apart from the comparatively brief Pour une Fête de printemps, performed in 1921, the last major works of Roussel to be introduced to the public had been the Evocations and Le Festin de l'Araignée, both of which had confirmed his reputation as a composer of refined sensitivity

and individual style. Since then he had written the opera-ballet Padmâvatî, in which he had greatly extended and hardened his musical language. Although the war years separate the composition of the two works, the Second Symphony is a logical consequence of Padmâvatî, as in it Roussel adapts the technical discoveries of the latter work to purely symphonic construction. It was therefore unfortunate for the reception of the symphony that Padmâvatî had not yet been performed, as innovations are always more acceptable in the theatre than in the concert-hall. Aware of the unfamiliarity of his idiom, Roussel considered it advisable to provide at the première a descriptive programme, according to which the three movements portray respectively the enthusiastic aspirations of youth, the joys and passions of maturity, and the sorrow, revolt and final acceptance of old age. Later he withdrew this programme, stating that he wished the work to be understood without external aid. In fact, however, the comparison with the evolution of an individual personality is expressed in sufficiently general terms to allow the music to follow its own inner logic, and it is, moreover, suggestive of the

rich variety and complexity of the symphony.

The first movement adopts the familiar pattern of slow introduction and sonata-form allegro, but the constructional significance of the introduction far exceeds that of Roussel's earlier examples: not only does it postulate, either complete or in embryo, some of the most important thematic elements; it also establishes clearly the particular harmonic terms of reference of the whole work. The sombre and equivocal opening on the lower woodwind, with its augmented sixth chord Gb - Bb - E \sharp , expresses harmonically the semitonal chromaticism which is such a striking feature of the composition, and the dissonance potential of the Gb - E \sharp relationship is further explored and realised in the combination of the chord of Gb major with the root and fifth of E \sharp [two bars after (3)]. The horizontal projection of this chromaticism occurs at (1) in the important theme in the bass, which oscillates uncertainly around Bb (Ex. 4) and is more strongly defined at the end of the introduction when Gb - E \sharp - F \sharp becomes an ornamental pedal leading into the allegro.

The allegro departs from traditional sonata-form in the inversion of the first and second subjects

in the recapitulation, and it ends with a return to the material of the introduction; it is, therefore, in the 'Bogen-' or 'arch-'form so widely popular in this century and already used by Roussel in the first movement of the Piano Trio and in Pour une Fête de printemps. The first subject, a long flowing melody on the violins supported by a pizzicato bass and sinuous counterpoints in the woodwind, is representative in its modal ambiguity and tonal instability of the general harmonic idiom (Ex. 5). The sixteen-bar preparation for the second subject illustrates a characteristically Rousselian procedure; it is built on a pedal C# in the bass, and the tension is gradually increased by the simultaneous operation of several factors - the strictly regular phrase structure, the progressive elaboration of the texture and of the dominant harmony, the ornamental development of the bass pedal and the overall crescendo from pp to ff. The second subject, bitingly rhythmical, enters at the climax in the key of F# major; but the expected resolution of the C# in the bass does not take place; C# is maintained as the bass for five bars, after which a definitive modulation to Eb major occurs, and the

new theme re-enters with unequivocal emphasis in that key. This method of combining release with suspense is undoubtedly one of the ingredients which contribute to making Roussel's idiom seem to some elusive, even baffling. An examination of the corresponding point in the recapitulation reveals the care with which Roussel generally approaches problems of tonality. Here a strongly emphasised altered dominant on F \sharp remains unresolved, giving way to a dominant on Ab which introduces the second subject in Db major. When the modulation to the key a minor third lower (parallel to the F \sharp - Eb modulation of the exposition) occurs five bars later, Eb major is accepted as the delayed but inevitable resolution of its preceding dominant and as the natural home tonality.

The development utilises material from the introduction as well as from the exposition in contrapuntal combinations. The keystone of the formal arch is a theme of tranquil character which is foreshadowed in the introduction and plays an important part in the last movement (Ex. 6). In the recapitulation the first subject, now following the second, is accompanied by a new chromatic counter-

melody in the 'cellos, leading smoothly into Ex. 4. The movement ends, leaving a conflict between the chords of Bb major and D major unresolved.

The second movement is a scherzo in G major, in which a slow movement replaces the trio. This combined form, excessively popular with French composers in general and with the musical descendants of Franck in particular, is inherently unsatisfactory. If the composer allows full scope to his lyric feeling in the central section, the form is shattered from within and the return of the scherzo is unconvincing, if not totally redundant; if on the other hand he confines his slow section to a suitable physical and emotional scale, it sounds either restricted or perfunctory. Roussel had already attempted this form in the Ville Rose of the Evocations, and subsequently adopted it for the middle movement of his second Violin Sonata, but thereafter abandoned it; in his later three-movement works, such as the Suite in F, the Piano Concerto, the Flute and String trios, the last movement fulfils the double function of scherzo and finale, with results which are both more logical and more effective.

It is because the scale and content of Roussel's

expression had by this time so greatly increased that this movement is less balanced than the Ville Rose. Whereas in the earlier work the slow section is episodic and descriptive rather than lyrical, and consequently disturbs as little as possible the overall unity, in this case it is an utterance of passionate intensity and explosive power which quite disrupts the movement. In Db major - C \sharp minor, the antithesis of the home tonality, it exploits the rich sonorities of divided strings and horns, and the long unbroken melodic line rises by graded stages from pp to a fff climax, giving way abruptly - too abruptly to be aesthetically satisfying - to the return of the scherzo. The difficult art of effecting a controlled relaxation of tension is one later mastered by the composer; but his attempt in this instance to evade the issue, an attempt forced on him by the exigencies of his form, is not successful. The Gordian knot cannot always be cut with impunity.

The scherzo section itself has that delicate fantasy and fleeting elegance whose formula, discovered by Mendelssohn, thereafter became the exclusive property of French composers. The double ostinato of the opening on flute and bassoon, the

flowing grace of the principal melody and the lightness of the orchestration are all in the best tradition of Lalo and Saint-Saëns, but the raucous and tonally destructive interventions of the clarinet, oboe and flute in their uppermost registers, owe nothing to any other composer. On its return the material is presented in substantially new guise. The principal melody, in a new rhythmic shape, is combined with the second subject from the first movement, but such a passing combination has an incidental rather than a structural value. The coda concentrates on the original ostinato figures, bringing the two harps and the celeste into the foreground, and an unexpected pedal C in the bass disguises its subdominant relationship to the tonic until its resolution in the last two pp bars.

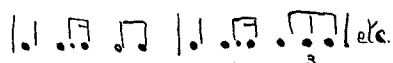
The last movement is from the formal point of view one of the most unorthodox Roussel ever wrote and it must be understood as a resumed development of the first movement, from which it derives much of its material. It does not take as its basis any classical form, and tonally it departs from convention by beginning in F minor and passing through other keys before settling in the home key of Bb major at

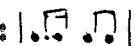


a comparatively late stage in its evolution.

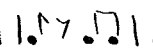
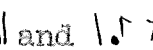
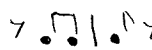
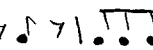
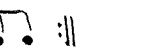

The introduction re-establishes the chromatic id'om temporarily abandoned for the more diatonic treatment of the scherzo. Its pushing and drooping phrases, suggestive of painful and frustrated effort, alternate with spasmodic outbursts from the basses, and a melodic fragment previously heard in the introduction to the first movement appears twice without explanation (Ex. 7). A violently dissonant chromatic figure in the lower strings, answered by an ejaculation from the wood-wind, starts the modérément anime.



The next part of the movement is founded, as are the development sections of the preceding movements, upon the repetition and extension of rhythmic patterns, a technical procedure fundamental to Roussel's later style. A succinct and clearly-marked pattern is either abstracted from a previously-stated melodic line or presented as a new element, and dominates by reiteration the subsequent development; it may evolve, either by extension or compression, and it may be combined with other patterns in other parts, which may in turn emerge as the principal rhythmic feature. So, in the movement under discussion, at

the modérément animé three bars after (65), the following pattern is presented in a 3-4 metre:



At (67) this is reduced to a 2-4 scheme:  whose rôle becomes subordinate, and a new figure, derived from Ex. 7, predominates:  

This figure is developed in its turn, appearing as  and  and  and  and  and 

Once again a new pattern emerges  between (71) and (72) . This pattern, consisting of three chromatically rising quavers, forms a link with the following section which re-introduces Ex. 5 from the first movement.

The prominence of this rhythmic ostinato technique in all Roussel's large-scale compositions written after this period has led some critics to exaggerate greatly his debt to Stravinsky and to the Sacre du Printemps in particular. The aesthetics of the two composers are opposed, as we have seen, and Roussel ignored the fundamental revolution implicit in the Sacre, namely, the substitution of additive for metrically based rhythm. Even in those parts of the Sacre where this new rhythmic

principle is not operative, as in the Danse des Adolescents and the Ronde Printanière, the chief significance of the ostinato patterns is that they form a rhythmic background against which melodic fragments are placed, and they play no part in any harmonic movement, other than to act as a tonal anchor, since the harmony is basically static. Roussel, on the other hand, does not abandon the traditional concept of harmony as movement between and around tonal centres, entailing variations of harmonic tension intimately associated with the rhythmic background and the overall phrase structure; so his patterns have not an exclusively rhythmic function, independent of any harmonic action, but are involved in the general harmonic and tonal movement, and consequently appear in varying melodic figurations. Nor are they, like Stravinsky's, in a state of perpetual motion requiring some more or less arbitrary external force to halt them, for their scope and duration are determined by the natural points of arrival and departure inherent in the tonal and phrase structure.

To return to the consideration of the finale: the rhythmic development is resumed after the entry

of Ex. 5, reaching its peak when Ex. 7 is announced in an expanded form by all the strings fff in Bb major (Ex. 7a). A prolonged diminuendo, a broadening of the tempo, and a change to triple time introduce the coda, in which the two principal themes of the work, Ex. 4 and Ex. 6, interweave with each other and with free counterpoints to create a texture of calm beauty. The dissonances resolve into a final concord, and a sustained open fifth, fading into silence, brings the movement to an end.

The conclusion of a work of art often reflects in artistic terms the innermost convictions and the guiding philosophy of the artist. This is particularly likely to be true in a case such as this, where the creator explicitly sees in his creation a microcosm of human existence. The end of this symphony does not recall Beethoven's triumphal assertion of humanity, nor the glorious Christian transfiguration of Franck, nor yet the unresolved enigma of Vaughan Williams's Sixth Symphony; but rather the hard-won reconciliation and ultimate serenity of the Buddhist philosopher, whom Roussel so greatly admired.

In spite of its position as a logical consequence

of his earlier works and, in a considerable degree, the progenitor of his later ones, the Second Symphony stands isolated in Roussel's output. In no other work is the balance between the poetic and imaginative faculty on the one hand and the intellect on the other so heavily weighted in favour of the latter, and Roussel does not entirely avoid the besetting danger of the intellectual - that self-consciousness which inhibits direct and unqualified expression. The ideas are good in themselves, but are sometimes overlaid by a mass of interesting but incidental detail, and consequently fail to impose themselves forcefully on the listener. It is therefore not surprising that Roussel's presentiment was justified: despite the concession of a descriptive programme, the symphony had a cool reception from the general public at its first performance, although it was welcomed with enthusiasm by some professional musicians, including Georges Auric, who, in the course of a letter to the composer, prophesied that in twenty years it would become a classic. (1) This prophecy has not been fulfilled, and it is likely that the symphony

(1) Bernard: op.cit., p.98.

will always appeal more to the musician who can take his pill without a sugar, or saccharine, coating, than to the general public: but the difficulties of the work do not explain, still less do they justify, the almost total neglect which it has suffered in this country.

The importance of the Second Symphony in helping Roussel to define more clearly than ever before his personal attitude and his artistic goal has already been mentioned; it was inevitable that the series of works which was the result of this confident self-realisation should culminate in an acceptance of the supreme challenge of symphonic construction, and Koussevitsky's commission provided the occasion, rather than the motive, for the composition of the Third Symphony, in G minor. In accordance with Roussel's conception of 'la musique pure', the symphony has no programme; it is in four movements, corresponding to the usual types of the classical symphony, and each movement is headed simply by a direction of tempo. It is written for full orchestra: triple wood-wind, quadruple brass, an extensive percussion department and strings.

It has been suggested that in his later works Roussel effects a reconciliation of the monistic style of Baroque music with the dramatic dualism of sonata forms, and a consideration of this observation makes a useful starting-point for a discussion of the first movement. The essential principle of the late Baroque concerto, as exemplified in the concertos of Bach, is the expansion of unity. In any movement all the material is derived from, or is in harmony with, the original self-contained proposition, namely, the ritornello; the tonal action takes place within a restricted field of closely-related keys, no one of which, apart from the tonic, is more important than any of the others, and the movement is controlled by a single rhythmic drive which may be momentarily held in check at a cadence point, but which is never relaxed or contradicted.

The sonata forms of the Viennese school, on the other hand, operate by the integration of diversity. Materials of conflicting character, opposing tonal areas of unequal importance and widely varying rhythmic impulses, are brought into a satisfactorily coherent relationship. It is possible, as some maintain, that in the greatest masterpieces this

apparent diversity is itself based on a latent harmonic or thematic unity accessible to analysis, but even if this is the case (and it has still to be demonstrated beyond possibility of doubt), the foregoing remarks are still valid as a general description of the manifest process of symphonic construction. The technique, however, admits of a wide degree of individual variation. So, for example, some of Haydn's later movements are as monothematic as the earlier concerto, and the first movement of Beethoven's Fifth Symphony has a rhythmic impulse as inexorable as any in Bach. So, too, the scope of the development, recapitulation and coda sections respectively vary considerably in different works. There is one procedure, however, which is essential to the structure and which is always observed: the second main tonal area, usually (but not, of course, invariably) the dominant or relative major, must be established in the exposition as an opposing pole to the tonic, however it is reached and whatever the nature of the material contained in it, because it is the resultant tonal tension and not any real or hypothetical thematic contrast which provides the motive power for the

movement's subsequent evolution.

In the first movement of the Third Symphony (an allegro vivo in 3-4 time), a strong rhythmic momentum is created at the opening by the regular repetition of rhythmic patterns which coincide with the points of harmonic emphasis, and this momentum is maintained throughout the first section, the transition and the dominant preparation for the second subject, as a background to the continuously evolving melodic line. So Roussel observes up until now the Baroque principle of rhythmic unity, although his dramatically sudden swerve to Gb major in the transition is of course outside the range of Baroque key relationships. The momentum is, however, reduced by the second subject itself, where the insistent background patterns give way to a texture composed of flowing contrapuntal lines, and it is further diminished by the cadence in Bb and its prolongation which occur at the end of the second subject. This relaxation contradicts the earlier rhythmic foundation of the movement; the next twelve bars have the task of restoring the original momentum before the return of the opening material - a task they cannot perform altogether convincingly.

From the symphonic point of view the second subject is inadequate, not because it is lyrical but because the tonality of Bb is not preserved long enough to establish firmly its status as a balancing tonal centre to G minor. Furthermore, the autonomous nature of the subject is stressed by the contrast of dynamic and texture, and above all by the degree of finality in the cadence which terminates it. When a self-contained lyric idea is used as a second subject, its continuation must be handled with great care (as Schubert and Brahms instinctively or consciously realised) if a halt in the musical development is to be avoided. In this case the idea does not become integrated in the movement, and has an arbitrary, episodic character.

Another flaw in the tonal scheme of the movement is the establishment of D major as a key in its own right at the end of the development, when the motto theme (Ex. 8), the transition theme and the second subject appear in that key. The powerful antipathy existing between any key and the key of its dominant in the alternate mode was recognised by the classical masters and their juxtaposition was avoided. In this instance the antipathy combines

with the conclusive character of the end of the second subject to destroy the continuity, and to rob the subsequent G minor of its legitimate effect as the re-establishment of the home tonality. Despite these defects, which would have been fatal in a lesser composer, the movement still remains attractive, because of the high quality of the individual ideas; the energy of the opening, the vigour of the characteristically leaping first subject and the grace of the second are immediate and lasting in their impact.

The second movement, an adagio in E \flat major, is, by reason of its scale and emotional intensity, the apex of the work. Its form is an expanded version of Rousset's favourite ternary structure, and the central section contains an elaborately worked-out fugue.

The first section is fundamentally diatonic, despite the free modal inflections of the individual lines, and its movement from climax to climax is directed by the harmonic progressions and aided by variations in the density of the counterpoint and the orchestral texture. The principal melodic line, wide-ranging and expressive, is introduced by a

version of the motto theme from the first movement.

The sense of tonal security is suspended by the incomplete cadence leading into the second section (andante - no key signature), and is further undermined by the tonal ambiguity of the succeeding passage, which exploits a figure first heard (or, in most performances, not heard), on the clarinets at the preceding climax. At (31) the music settles on Bb and a version of the motto theme on the violins makes clear the connection between the latter and the following fugue-subject. The fugue uses E and its dominant B as its tonal foundation, but the superstructure is harmonically complex, owing to the chromaticism of the subject and its bi-tonal relationship with the counter-subject. (Ex. 9) At the end of the fugal development the subject combines with an augmented version of itself over a dominant pedal and leads to the final entry on E. A sudden switch at the culminating point presents a dominant ninth on Bb, spread over two bars and outstanding in this context for its very orthodoxy. The subsequent passage illustrates a special feature of the composer's technique, of which a particular application has already been noted

in the first movement of the Second Symphony; this procedure might be termed the 'delayed resolution of dominants'. A dominant chord is made prominent by its position, duration or emphasis, but is immediately followed by material of ambiguous tonality; its directive force, therefore, remains contained, and necessitates a later appearance of the key of resolution. (This procedure is essentially different from the interrupted cadence of classical music, where the dominant tension is released, although not in the way expected.) In this case, then, in spite of a temporary tonal indecision, there is no doubt but that the final tonality will be Eb. An example of this principle operating on a wider scale will be discussed later in connection with the ballet Bacchus et Ariane.

The material of the first section is, as is always the case with Roussel, freely varied on its return. The animando poco a poco and the più mosso recall certain passages in Holst and also, unfortunately, Miss Imogen Holst's penetrating remark that her father's accelerandi were sometimes designed to carry him over some shaky ground as quickly as possible; this is the one unconvincing moment in an otherwise

flawlessly contrived movement. The coda makes a poetic use of the anharmonic pun G \sharp - Ab, which has already played a literally crucial part in the combination of the subject and counter-subject of the fugue, before establishing the final cadence.

The third movement exchanges the introspection of the study for the bustling gaiety and broad humour of the village fête. It is a rollicking waltz whose clear, fresh melodies, forceful rhythm and colourful orchestration have an immediate appeal which rightly conceals craftsmanship of the highest order; in a notoriously difficult situation Roussel steers a course between the Scylla and Charybdis of false naïveté and excessive sophistication with an aplomb Chabrier himself might have envied. The diatonic melodies are placed in a harmonic setting whose sharp chromaticism is made to seem entirely appropriate to them, and their square phrasing is unobtrusively varied by extension and overlapping; the tonal scheme is perfectly adjusted to the scale of the movement, which itself corresponds exactly to the weight of the material involved.

The finale, an allegro con spirito, in G major, is the weakest movement in the symphony, displaying

a perfunctoriness of construction surprising in Roussel. The basic ideas of the movement are well conceived (especially the virile second subject), but they are of very disparate character and never become unified. A central adagio in the home key, in which the solo violin has a meditative improvisation on the motto theme, is out of place in its context, and the ending of the Second Symphony gives some grounds for thinking that Roussel may have originally intended this passage as an epilogue to the whole work. It is followed by a long modulatory section transposed bodily from the exposition with a disregard for the resultant tonal disorder. The build-up to the final climactic entry of the motto theme is laboured in its sequential repetition, and once again an increase in tempo which is not inherent in the material exposes rather than alleviates a weakness.

The Fourth Symphony, in A major (op.53) was composed in 1934 and first performed in the following year. Like the Third Symphony, it is in four movements, but its individuality is announced immediately by the slow introduction to the first movement. Some critics have seen in this intro-

movement's subsequent evolution.

In the first movement of the Third Symphony (an allegro vivo in 3-4 time), a strong rhythmic momentum is created at the opening by the regular repetition of rhythmic patterns which coincide with the points of harmonic emphasis, and this momentum is maintained throughout the first section, the transition and the dominant preparation for the second subject, as a background to the continuously evolving melodic line. So Roussel observes up until now the Baroque principle of rhythmic unity, although his dramatically sudden swerve to Gb major in the transition is of course outside the range of Baroque key relationships. The momentum is, however, reduced by the second subject itself, where the insistent background patterns give way to a texture composed of flowing contrapuntal lines, and it is further diminished by the cadence in Bb and its prolongation which occur at the end of the second subject. This relaxation contradicts the earlier rhythmic foundation of the movement; the next twelve bars have the task of restoring the original momentum before the return of the opening material - a task they cannot perform altogether convincingly.

From the symphonic point of view the second subject is inadequate, not because it is lyrical but because the tonality of Bb is not preserved long enough to establish firmly its status as a balancing tonal centre to G minor. Furthermore, the autonomous nature of the subject is stressed by the contrast of dynamic and texture, and above all by the degree of finality in the cadence which terminates it. When a self-contained lyric idea is used as a second subject, its continuation must be handled with great care (as Schubert and Brahms instinctively or consciously realised) if a halt in the musical development is to be avoided. In this case the idea does not become integrated in the movement, and has an arbitrary, episodic character.

Another flaw in the tonal scheme of the movement is the establishment of D major as a key in its own right at the end of the development, when the motto theme (Ex. 8), the transition theme and the second subject appear in that key. The powerful antipathy existing between any key and the key of its dominant in the alternate mode was recognised by the classical masters and their juxtaposition was avoided. In this instance the antipathy combines

version of the motto theme from the first movement.

The sense of tonal security is suspended by the incomplete cadence leading into the second section (andante - no key signature), and is further undermined by the tonal ambiguity of the succeeding passage, which exploits a figure first heard (or, in most performances, not heard), on the clarinets at the preceding climax. At (31) the music settles on Bb and a version of the motto theme on the violins makes clear the connection between the latter and the following fugue-subject. The fugue uses E and its dominant B as its tonal foundation, but the superstructure is harmonically complex, owing to the chromaticism of the subject and its bi-tonal relationship with the counter-subject. (Ex. 9) At the end of the fugal development the subject combines with an augmented version of itself over a dominant pedal and leads to the final entry on E. A sudden switch at the culminating point presents a dominant ninth on Bb, spread over two bars and outstanding in this context for its very orthodoxy. The subsequent passage illustrates a special feature of the composer's technique, of which a particular application has already been noted

in the first movement of the Second Symphony; this procedure might be termed the 'delayed resolution of dominants'. A dominant chord is made prominent by its position, duration or emphasis, but is immediately followed by material of ambiguous tonality; its directive force, therefore, remains contained, and necessitates a later appearance of the key of resolution. (This procedure is essentially different from the interrupted cadence of classical music, where the dominant tension is released, although not in the way expected.) In this case, then, in spite of a temporary tonal indecision, there is no doubt but that the final tonality will be Eb. An example of this principle operating on a wider scale will be discussed later in connection with the ballet Bacchus et Ariane.

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duction the last traces of d'Indy's influence on Roussel; but in fact it provides conclusive proof of the composer's liberation from the methods of the Schola. Cyclic construction was fundamental to d'Indy's symphonic teaching and for him the introduction was, to use the familiar scholastic metaphor, the seed from which the entire work grew, in that it presented in embryo the cyclic theme or themes which dominated the structure. Roussel had been moving steadily away from this conception; in the Second Symphony the cyclic theme is of the greatest importance, but its significance in the Third Symphony is reduced to that of a motto theme, and in the Fourth Symphony there is no cyclic or motto theme at all. The brief quotations from the first two movements in the introduction of this work have no structural significance, and so d'Indy's basic principle is implicitly rejected. This is not to say that they are meaningless; they represent in miniature the dramatic conflict which exists throughout the work between elements of widely differing character.

The allegro con brio suffers from the same weakness as the first movement of the Third Symphony,

and in this case the incoherence of the material is aggravated by the fluctuations of tempo. After the vigorously terse opening, the meno mosso entry of the second subject is carefully prepared, but the debilitating effect of this relaxation of the initial drive is not counteracted by the ensuing accelerando and più allegro: this section relies on the sequential treatment of inferior material, whose inadequacy is stressed by the fact that it reappears in the development, essentially unchanged, at a different tempo. The recapitulation follows the same course as the exposition; the second subject is enhanced by new counterpoints and orchestration, but the abrupt return of the opening as a coda has by this time lost its impact, and seems redundant.

Once again the slow movement is made the emotional centre of the symphony; but while the adagio of the Third Symphony depends for its central climax on the impersonal force of its fugue, this movement preserves an intensely lyric impulse throughout. An endless melodic line, owing nothing to Wagner, governs the movement; in its evolution it passes through clearly-marked phases, which are distinguished

from one another not only by the character of the principal line, but also by the nature of the harmonic and contrapuntal background and of the orchestration.

So, for example, the movement opens with an eight-bar paragraph in which the non-repetitive melodic line is the uppermost voice in a four-part string texture and which firmly establishes the tonality of C major. There is now a sudden change in the texture and the orchestration, the melodic line becomes static and repetitive and the tonality is confused. This tonal uncertainty is crystallised into a positive bitonality at the poco meno lento, where the accompanying parts move around E major and the oscillating melody is pinned to Db. The tonal unity is not restored until the succeeding point of climax.

This passage is a good illustration of Roussel's attitude to, and use of, bi-tonal procedures. In a text quoted by Bernard he expresses his personal views. Speaking of contemporary music, he says:

'Two currents may be distinguished, one tending towards complete atonality, the other leading to more or less independent polytonality. The first of these tendencies seems to me dangerous when set

up as a principle, but a polytonality which, under the predominant influence of a firmly established key, sets in motion designs which are foreign to this key, weaving them together in fluent counterpoint - such a polytonality must necessarily enrich the language of music.'(1)

This statement is in fact a summary of Roussel's own harmonic practice. His mistrust of any artistic system was deep-rooted, and he never attempted to take polytonality to its logical conclusion and write in several keys simultaneously throughout a movement, as did some of his contemporaries, notably Milhaud. His application of polytonality is rather a horizontal extension of that of dissonance in classical music, and fulfils the same psychological function. Just as dissonance is a temporary interruption of the unity of consonance, so polytonality for Roussel is the temporary interruption of the unity of monotonality. Since his aim is not to induce a simultaneous and precisely defined awareness of two or even more conflicting tonal centres, but merely to suspend reference to a single centre, he is not obliged - as are the logical polytonalists - to present each single line in an easily recognisable diatonic form,

(1) Bernard: op.cit., p. 122.

and some of these passages might more accurately be described as atonal than as polytonal (if this word did not have misleading associations) on account of the chromatic nature of the material involved.

Such a free use of polytonal procedures has its responsibilities as well as its privileges, and demands in particular a highly sensitive aural judgment to ensure the successful control of the requisite degree of tonal instability and the satisfactory resolution of the polytonal elements into subsequent tonal unity. Roussel, like his great French contemporaries Debussy and Ravel, had an exceptional aural sensitivity, and his judgment in this respect is well-nigh infallible, as an examination of any polytonal passage, such as the poco meno lento mentioned here, will show. In this the tension induced by the tonal disturbance is momentarily eased at (25), only to be increased once more and maintained until its release at the following ff (eight bars after (25)).

At the poco piu mosso [after (28)] the interweaving contrapuntal lines and irregular phrase-lengths stiffen into more homophonic material and

regular phrases with insistent reiteration of rhythmic patterns, which carry the music forward to the fff climax. As a general rule Roussel skilfully varies his phrase structures in his later works; but at times he introduces an emphatic regularity to build up to a climax, in much the same way as does Beethoven (in the codas to the Egmont overture and to the first movement of the Seventh Symphony, for example). This technique is not free of hazard: the dividing line between poise and paralysis is sometimes a narrow one, and what creates for some an overwhelming impression of contained strength will seem to others to be merely rigid. Much will depend on the context and on the other relevant factors, such as harmony. This particular instance is unequivocally successful; the patterning does not continue for too long, and the rising bass and accumulative orchestration assist in producing a climax of tremendous power.

In the abbreviated return of the first section the orchestration is more colourful; a notable combination occurs five bars after (30), when a solo flute is accompanied by muted horn and trumpets,

and two bassoons. The brief coda re-establishes the atmosphere of tranquillity in which the movement began, and is one of Roussel's most inspired endings.

The third movement, an allegro scherzando in 6-8 time, attempts to reconcile the flowing grace of the scherzo of the Second Symphony with the robust vigour of that of the Third Symphony, and is, therefore, more sophisticated than either. Its effects, of which the most prominent is an ambiguity between duple and triple time, are more calculated than those of its predecessors, and the movement as a whole is complex rather than subtle. Nevertheless, there is an uninterrupted drive throughout, and once again the form and content are exactly matched.

If the allegro scherzando is not the equal of the corresponding movement in the Third Symphony, this deficiency is more than made good by the concluding allegro molto, which far excels its opposite number, both in invention and construction. This is one of Roussel's most concise movements, lasting only four minutes in performance, yet it contains a rich profusion of highly original ideas, all of

them bound together by a forward impetus that never falters. It is in a free rondo form, and the quality of the composer's imagination is apparent in the variety of ways in which the principal theme (Ex. 10) is expanded in the course of the movement. The second main theme (Ex. 11) stands in strong contrast to the first, not only in its own melodic and rhythmic figuration, but also in its undiatonic harmonisation [vide (56)]. At the climactic return to the home key of A major [after (62)] Roussel puts to good use what was probably the last remaining item of the d'Indy legacy. The rhythmic deformation of themes was a feature of d'Indy's practice and teaching which Roussel retained and applied at some point in each of his four symphonies, but in none is the device more telling than here; the principal theme on its re-entry adapts itself to an abrupt and syncopated rhythmic pattern which has been becoming increasingly assertive for some time, and in so doing its manner is transformed from feminine persuasion to the brusque authority of the parade-ground (Ex. 10a).

Throughout the movement there is a nonchalant virtuosity of instrumentation whose brilliance is not

diminished by the total absence of gratuitous display. From the opening, where the main theme is announced on the oboe and accompanied by arpeggios on the clarinets, harp and pizzicato strings to the final unison tutti, the orchestration is designed to throw light on the nature of the ideas themselves. While selective citation is almost invidious, the use of the percussion between (61) and (62) is outstanding as an example of the maximum effect achieved with the utmost economy.

In attempting to assess Roussel's position as a symphonist it is of little value to draw a parallel between him and any of his French predecessors - Berlioz, Franck, Chausson or even d'Indy - for the nature of his personality is too distinct from that of any of these men for its mature expression in the last three symphonies to be comparable to theirs. Nor can he be related to any other outstanding symphonist of the twentieth century: Sibelius, Shostakovich and Vaughan Williams have nothing in common with him either in their antecedents or in their symphonic methods. Yet there is one composer whose work in the field of the symphony, if not directly comparable for obvious reasons to that

of Roussel, nevertheless suggests a line of approach to it. That composer is Schumann.

It would be superfluous to labour the differences of tradition, background and style which separate the two men, for these are self-evident. Their affinities of temperament are less obvious, but no less genuine. The dualism which lay at the root of Schumann's being, and which he himself symbolised in the antithesis Florestan-Eusebius, existed also in Roussel, although the Frenchman was able to bring the opposing forces into a harmonious equilibrium, and so avoid the inner conflict whose outcome, in Schumann's case, proved so tragic. Whether this dualism be described in terms of masculinity and femininity, intellect and emotion, energy and lyricism, extroversion and introspection, its artistic consequences are clear: the music of both these composers embraces widely contrasting elements corresponding more or less exactly to the two sides of their personalities. So it is no coincidence that Schumann's favourite musical directions are lebhaft and innig, and these are matched by Roussel's deciso (or its equivalent) and espressivo.

A further point of contact between them is the

fact that, in spite of their intellectual abilities, neither of them was a symphonist by natural inclination; they both tended to think musically in self-contained ideas which were not susceptible of extended development. Because of this fundamentally unsymphonic cast of mind, they are at their best in those movements where a high degree of formal organisation is not necessary, and where the two aspects of their personalities may be expressed either independently or in direct contrast. Thus it is the inner movements of their symphonies which are in general the most successful: working within a simple formal framework they can exploit their drive and their lyricism, their rhythmic subtlety and their sense of tonal variety. In the extreme movements, where a more complex structure is required, their extensions are sometimes artificial, and their material is not always fully integrated.

The symphonies of Schumann, despite their imperfections, are the work of a composer of genius, and have rightly survived. But, however, it may have seemed to his contemporaries, it is now apparent that they have had little or no influence on the subsequent evolution of the symphony, because they

made no radically new contribution to symphonic thought. So, too, those who pinned their hopes on Roussel as the potential founder of a modern French symphonic school have been disappointed. As is the case with Schumann, Roussel's symphonies are at once too traditional and too personal to open up any new perspectives for his successors, and the devout who have been awaiting a Messianic Coming in French music have had perforce to look for it elsewhere. Nevertheless, in art, influence and value are never synonymous, and rarely coincide. Roussel's symphonies stand in isolation, but this isolation is a splendid one. If he did not fully solve the problem of writing symphonic music in the twentieth century, he did not, as did so many of his contemporaries, ignore it, and despite their weaknesses his symphonies will continue to be performed long after the more facile productions of some of his compatriots have passed into the oblivion they so richly deserve.

Its nomenclature rather than its content necessitates the mention of the Sinfonietta for string orchestra (op.52) as a post scriptum to this chapter. It was composed during the summer of

1934, when Roussel was convalescing after a serious illness. Internal thematic and tonal evidence suggests that it was originally conceived as an Introduction and Allegro, to which the opening allegro molto was later added: whether or not this was the case, the first movement does not completely harmonise in its style with the other two. However, the work is well written for its medium; its ideas, though slight, are effective and forcefully presented, and its verve and youthful vitality bear no relationship to the composer's state of physical weakness at the time of its conception.

CHAPTER VI

Other Orchestral Works

Roussel's first orchestral composition, the symphonic poem Résurrection, was written under d'Indy's tuition in 1903. The score, now in the library of the Paris Conservatoire, was not published; but a piano reduction appeared in 1909. The work was scored for full orchestra with triple woodwind, and the instrumentation shows no signs of immaturity. The ideas, however, are banal, and their working-out is marred by the usual scholastic faults of harmonic and structural aimlessness. The title refers to the novel of the same name by Tolstoi, but throws no light on the music. It is unlikely that Résurrection will be heard again: certainly its performance would not enhance the composer's reputation.

On the other hand, the orchestral tryptich Evocations, (op.15), composed in 1910 and 1911, has been unjustly neglected. Its three movements are entitled Les Dieux dans l'ombre des Cavernes, La Ville Rose and Aux Bords du Fleuve sacré, and were inspired respectively by Roussel's memories of the caves at Ellora, of Jaipur and of Benares on the banks of the Ganges. The last movement has important parts for choirs and soloists, based on a text by M.D. Calvocoressi.

Acclaimed at its first performance, on 18th May 1912, by public and critics alike, Evocations had the initial advantage of being presented at a particularly auspicious moment. The East has for long provided a stimulus for the French artist in all fields, and orientalism, genuine or imagined, is a constantly recurring phenomenon in the history of French culture. An exotic tradition was maintained in nineteenth-century opera by Bizet, Massenet and Saint-Saëns, and the impetus given to this trend by the discovery of the Russian school of composers reached its peak in the decade preceding the first World War. Less than a month before the première of Evocations Natacha Trouhanova gave an historic ballet recital in Paris, in which three major French compositions of oriental inspiration were included, each being conducted by its composer: La Péri, by Dukas, d'Indy's Istar, and La Tragédie de Salomé, by Florent Schmitt. Yet Evocations, in spite of its link with these works, has little in common with any of them. It is richer and more subtle than Istar, less complex and barbaric than Salomé, and avoids the enervating Rimskyan chromaticism and rigidity of structure which weaken La Péri. The distinction of

the composer's conception, as has already been suggested, is expressed by a highly individual style. The sensuous qualities of the score are subject to a rigorous intellectual control and, despite the richness of the orchestration and the variety of the harmony, the most striking features of Evocations are its rhythmic energy and its sharp melodic outline.

Louis Vuillemin, in his biography of Roussel, gives a detailed descriptive analysis of Evocations which he undoubtedly derived from the composer himself. The first movement, Les Dieux dans l'ombre des Cavernes, portrays successively the tranquil light of day; the descent into the caverns; the revelation of the subterranean temple dominated by the representation of Siva in his three traditional attitudes as god of the dance, god of destruction and god of love; and the return to daylight. In its scoring the clear diatonic opening contrasts with the darkly chromatic choral of the temple. The first two attitudes of Siva are expressed by two short motives, melodically distinct but rhythmically related (Ex. 12 and Ex. 13): these are developed by derivation and expansion in the manner already noted

in dealing with the Second Symphony. The theme of love is subsequently introduced and combined with the other themes at the great climax of the movement. The coda reintroduces the opening material.

There is clearly no fundamental revolution here in Roussel's formal procedures: the cyclic return of the opening and the combination of different thematic elements are characteristics of the earlier works. But the composer has been stimulated to achieve an expanded scale of development and an intensification of his harmonic language by the nature and the scope of his extra-musical subject.

The same observations apply to the second movement, La Ville Rose. This scherzo recalls the city of Lahore, with its sparkling minarets and temples, the majesty and opulence of its ceremonial, the bustle of its market-place and the hypnotic grace of the dancers. The principal theme is pentatonic and supplies most of the material for the first section. The melody announcing the formal entry of the rajah accompanied by his elephants was heard and noted by Roussel in India (Ex. 14). The slow central section suggests the dance by means of an undulating and modal melodic line and static harmonies. A gradual

accelerando leads into the freely treated return of the first part. This movement is the most successful of Roussel's experiments with this hybrid form. The central section, essentially decorative and colouristic, does not create an emotional tension which would destroy the balance of the movement as a whole.

The last movement is governed in its form and spirit by the text of Calvocoressi. This prose poem has no great literary value, and its self-conscious exoticism is as dated as is the medium: but as the basis of a musical setting it has the merits of simple formal division and vivid imagery. At the opening the chorus announces the setting of the sun and the approach of night, whose perfumes entice young lovers to wander under the moonlit trees. In the development which follows, the wordless chorus creates an atmosphere of warm voluptuousness, and the music rises to a passionate climax. The coming of day is heralded by a priest in an ecstatic chant, and the final section is a grandiloquent paean to the sun, with the whole chorus taking part.

Musical unity is lent to the movement by two factors: the recurrence of thematic material, and the

skilful manipulation of tonality, which ensures that A major establishes itself as the home key, despite its delayed appearance and the freedom of modulation throughout the movement.

It is easy enough to situate Evocations, both in relation to contemporary trends and to Roussel's evolution. Nevertheless this highly personal work defies classification, and it is perhaps for this reason that it has dropped out of the general repertoire while other inferior music has survived.

The symphonic sketch Pour une Fête de printemps, composed in 1921, was originally intended as a movement of the Second Symphony, and is stylistically related to the larger work. Once more Roussel adopts a symmetrical formal pattern; the principal directions of tempo are assez lent - assez animé - très animé - lent - très animé - moins animé - assez lent. Tempi are merged into one another by gradual alteration of the pulse. The principle of development is the same as that of the symphony: expansion and variation of short rhythmic motives. The orchestral texture is involved, and the harmonic idiom astringent. Bitonal effects are numerous, and the harmony is intensified by an elaborate use of interior and superior

pedals, often doubled. Despite these complexities the music remains predominantly tonal. Roussel's ability to integrate extreme dissonance into a tonal framework is illustrated at the beginning of the work (Ex. 14). This opening chord, a superposition of D \sharp major (Eb major) and A major, resolves by logical progression of parts into the chord on D \flat in the fourth bar: this chord has a clear dominant function, suggesting the tonality of G major. In this way the basic tonality of the piece is adumbrated at the start, although characteristically this dominant itself does not resolve.

In performance the composer's technical skill does not obtrude, and the work has all the freshness and exhilaration implied by its title.

Three orchestral works composed in close succession were responsible for Roussel's 'neo-classical' label: the Suite in F, the Concert for small orchestra, and the Piano Concerto. These illustrate, each in a different way, the extent of Roussel's debt to classical forms and procedures, and the manner in which these techniques are absorbed and transformed into an individual and contemporary idiom.

The first of them, the Suite in F, for full

orchestra, was composed in 1926. Dedicated to Serge Koussevitsky, it was first performed by the Boston Symphony Orchestra in the following year. The Suite is in three movements - Prelude, Sarabande and Gigue - and is clearly tonal, with the extreme movements in F major and the Sarabande in the relative minor key. In its structure the Prelude derives from ritornello and ternary forms; but Roussel's handling of these forms is original. The opening ritornello theme, in unbroken quavers, and its derivatives, recur in various keys in the classical manner, with an emphatic close into the dominant in the middle. This material, however, is combined with a counter-melody which evolves through various phases and which in its bounding energy, its angularity of outline and its striking rhythmic configuration is entirely individual, belying the more impersonal nature of the ritornello line. The harmony is intensified and the texture enriched by subordinate counterpoints. The impetus of the rhythm, the formal clarity and the vivid orchestral colouring - in particular the brilliantly aggressive use of the brass section (so well suited to the distinguishing characteristics of the Boston

orchestra) - all these make the Prelude one of Roussel's most extroverted and powerful movements. Its only weakness is a stiffness in the approach to some of the cadences (in particular fig. 5 - fig. 7 and fig. 15 - fig. 16), where the harmonic movement is halted and the phrasing is too square.

The Sarabande does not preserve the traditional binary division nor the accented second beat; but its poise, breadth and passionate intensity recall the spirit of the ancient dance, and establish its claim to kinship with the finest classical examples. The movement begins with a twelve-bar melody surrounded by elaborate counterpoints, and this melody returns at the end with new accompaniments and harmonisation. The central section, based mainly on material from the opening, moves by stages from pp to a massive climax, which relaxes for the return.

From the harmonic point of view this is one of Roussel's most remarkable movements; much of the harmony depends on a tension between the chords of D minor and its submediant relation Bb major on the one hand, and D minor and C# major on the other. The very first chord has an ambiguous implication (Ex. 15); (The accented and written-out mordent which begins

the melody is a small but unmistakable hall-mark of the composer's style.) The opening paragraph, despite its modal inflections, fixes the tonality of D minor: this stability is immediately contradicted, in the thirteenth bar, by the C \sharp - G \sharp ostinato figure in the bass, and the harmony defines itself after two bars as a dominant minor ninth on C \sharp . Arthur Hoérée has quoted the entry of the clarinet in this bar as an example of Roussel's use of bitonality, pointing out that the first notes of the clarinet melody, though undoubtedly suggesting Bb major, are enharmonically part of the chord of the dominant thirteenth on C \sharp . This is true; moreover, the subtlety of Roussel's procedure does not end there. The first three notes of the new melodic phrase are identical to the last three of the previous one, and the two phrases are thus linked aurally; this link is strengthened by the persistence of a D \flat throughout the two intervening bars. At fig. 21 et seq., a crucial position before the main crescendo, the dominant thirteenth on C \sharp is heard again, with an enharmonic change from E \sharp to F \flat in the bass (four bars after fig. 21). Finally, at the peak of the climax, when a dominant seventh on D

is combined with its G minor resolution, the outline of the mordent figure in the subsequent bars suggests once more a dominant ninth on C \sharp . Another important point in the general harmonic structure is the use of pedals to give coherence to strong harmonic changes, as, for example, the pedals G \sharp and C \sharp between fig. 21 and fig. 22. Throughout the movement the orchestration underlines the character of the musical ideas.

The Gigue is in free rondo form. Its main theme is announced by the violins and trumpet after a tonally misleading introduction. This is one of the comparatively rare occasions on which Roussel writes an intentionally naive and popular melody, evoking associations with the nursery or the café concert. A second tune, which combines with the first before the end of the movement, is of a similar inspiration (Ex. 16 and Ex. 17). The slightly ironic humour is emphasised by the deliberate 'wrong-note' writing in some of the episodes, and by the unusual effects of orchestration. The movement has some good features, especially as a finale, but it does not carry the complete conviction of the other two. The thematic treatment is disjointed, and the tonal lay-out has not

the inevitability inherent in the two previous movements.

The Suite in F has won widespread acclaim; but the composer's next work has been neglected outside his own country. Roussel began the Concert for small orchestra (op.34) immediately after the completion of the Suite, and finished the score in February 1927. In spite of this proximity, the two compositions are totally different in character. The Suite looks back to the late Baroque Italo-German style, and has a Handelian breadth and simplicity of effect. The Concert, on the other hand, is inspired by the French eighteenth-century Rococo tradition. As its name implies, it is essentially a concerted piece for solo instruments, and as such is a French parallel to the Kammersymphonie of the modern Teutonic school. In the Concert the massive harmonies of the Suite in F are replaced by a texture both dense and extremely contrapuntal. Instead of the strongly delineated and contrasted orchestral groupings of the earlier work, the orchestration of the Concert is founded on precisely calculated combinations of individual tone-colours.

The first movement, an allegro in A minor, does

not show the composer at his best. Contrapuntal ingenuity and skilled instrumentation cannot conceal the insipidity of the principal ideas, and the phrase-structure is four-square and repetitive.

As is often the case in Roussel's larger compositions, the slow movement is the most completely successful. It would scarcely be an exaggeration to say that Roussel reveals a more profound understanding of the classical orchestra in the fifty bars of this andante than some other composers have done in the same number of works. Not only are the musical ideas perfectly adapted to the respective instruments; each strand appears to derive from the very nature of the instrument itself. The resultant texture is complex and multi-coloured, but consistently economical and translucent (Ex. 18). The principal melodic line of the movement, announced by the bassoon in its upper register, is one of the composer's modally ambiguous and undulating themes, whose oscillatory movement gives them a paradoxically static quality. In this instance the sense of immobility thus induced is intensified by the repetitive accompanying phrase of the flutes and the disembodied counterpoint of the high mated violins, and is main-

tained all through the movement by the slow rate of harmonic change.

The eighteenth-century Concert was based on dance forms, and Roussel ends his work with a quick waltz marked presto. This expresses the composer's personal brand of caustic humour, and verges on a parody of that most stereotyped of all musical forms, the Viennese waltz. The note of irony is introduced by the opening accompanimental figure, with its heavily-marked accent, and by the swinging trumpet melody. Other features recalling the standard waltz type are: the form, consisting of short independent sections loosely connected; the use of sequence in the melodic construction; and the characteristic configuration of the bass and the choral accompaniments. The violent contrast between diatonic and dissonant chromatic harmony stresses the sardonic spirit of the movement. This waltz has a fine impetus throughout, and characteristically the coda carries the music from a fff to a final pianissimo chord, thus reversing the usual procedure.

In the Piano Concerto, (op.36), written in 1927, Roussel approaches for the first time the issue of the relationship between a keyboard instrument and

the orchestra. In view of his dislike of musical exhibitionism it is not surprising that he follows French precedent and treats the pianist as a concertante rather than as a solo performer. In the first and last movements the piano part is integrated into the orchestral texture, and it is only in the slow movement that Roussel exploits the opposition of sonority between the keyboard and the orchestra as a structural element. Consequently the formal problems inherent in the Romantic conception of the concerto do not arise in this instance, and for the extreme movements Roussel adapts his customary sonata and rondo forms.

The pattern of the opening allegro molto is clear and illustrates the composer's conception of 'schematised' form: exposition with first and second subjects; development based on part of the first subject; recapitulation, with omission of material used in the development; and coda based on the opening idea. There are, however, several features which distinguish this movement from any other example of Roussel's sonata-form. The beginning in particular is unique: the first idea is transposed an augmented fourth from its normal position in the

home key, and is announced over a protracted and ornamented dominant pedal on the piano. So the establishment of the tonic chord itself is delayed for some forty bars.

In its harmonic idiom the concerto, and especially the opening movement, is closely related to the contemporaneous Psalm 80. Possibly inspired by the percussive nature of the piano, the composer employs a colouristic linear dissonance to a greater extent here than elsewhere, by doubling melodic lines and essential harmony notes at the second (Ex. 19).

The slow movement, a ternary adagio in Eb major, is one of the most deeply moving of all Roussel's inspirations. The texture expands quietly from the initial B \flat in the bass, the piano developing a gently-moving ostinato figure, whose dissonance suggests a note of perturbation in the atmosphere of hieratic calm. Over this accompaniment the cor anglais introduces a melody of poignant beauty, continued in turn by the trumpet, the clarinet and the oboe. Again the resolution to the tonic chord is delayed, this time for twenty-six bars. In the middle section the piano abandons its accompanying rôle and leads with an arabesque-like theme, thus recalling Roussel's

admiration for Chopin (Ex. 20). This line loses its impetus, droops and is taken up by the clarinet in the transition to the return. The first melody is then played in the tenor register of the piano, supported by new harmonies. The movement ends in a mood of serene acceptance, with a quiet reference by the piano to the arabesque. Throughout there is the utmost economy and felicity of orchestration.

The finale, allegro con spirito, is an amalgam of rondo and variation form. The principal theme is altered or re-harmonised on each of its subsequent appearances, and much of the episodic material is derived from it. The movement opens with a statement of the bass of the theme accompanied by chords; then the theme itself is announced over the bass. The irregular phrasing and the angular contours of this melody give it an ungainly capriciousness, a mood which prevails through most of the movement. The quotations in Ex. 21 and Ex. 21a show how Roussel contrives to vary his theme. These variations are sufficiently independent of their source to provide a contrast to it; at the same time their connection with it is intuitively apprehended, and the movement has a degree of unity which makes it one of Roussel's

most successful finales.

The composer has been criticised for making excessive use of the lower octaves of the piano in this concerto. But a study of the relevant passages reveals that this effect always corresponds to the nature of the musical ideas being expressed. In the allegro molto, for instance, the brutal energy of the first subject is emphasised by the low-placed percussive dissonances of the piano. And in the adagio, at fig. 28, a sense of uncertain expectancy is induced by the modally vacillating roll in the bass.

This concerto, which must rank as one of the most individual examples of the form written in this century, is comparatively unknown. The solo part offers no occasion for virtuosic display, while making considerable demands on the technique and, above all, on the musicianship of the player. So it remains outside the repertoire of the average solo performer.

The Petite Suite (op.59) for orchestra was composed between January and June, 1929. The Aubade and Mascarade were performed together at the Roussel Festival in April of that year, and the Pastorale was

added later. In spirit the Petite Suite evokes the Arcadian world of Watteau and Marivaux, and is therefore linked to the earlier Divertissement.

The Aubade has all the joyous freshness of a spring morning, and demonstrates the composer's ability to translate a scene or an atmosphere into musical terms. Picturesque detail is not lacking. The figuration of the opening irresistibly suggests the strumming of a guitar, and the dawn chorus is represented by a twittering figure on the flutes (Ex. 22). But Roussel does not rely exclusively on musical imitation to create his picture. The stumbling rhythm (6-8 plus 4-8), the swaying melody with its accented chromatic appoggiaturas (Ex. 23), the blatant orchestration - all these conjure up a noisily happy serenader, whose activities culminate, in the traditional manner, in precipitous flight.

The tonal scheme of the work provides convincing evidence for the assumption that the insertion of the Pastorale was an afterthought, possibly occasioned by the identity of tempo and general similarity of the other two movements. The Aubade is in A major, with an increasingly prominent G natural. The final note cluster of the movement implies a dominant on A.

In the original two-movement version this was resolved naturally by the beginning of the Mascarade, which is in D major. But the interpolation of the Pastorale in F major after the Aubade posed the problem of the satisfactory resolution of this dominant. Roussel neatly made a virtue of his necessity by introducing the Pastorale with a horn phrase in D minor, in this way both resolving the dominant and imposing a new atmosphere of tranquil ease. Unfortunately the rest of the movement does not fulfil this initial promise. It is disjointed, and the central andantino bears no stylistic relationship to the first and last sections. This formal weakness, however, is in part compensated by the varied orchestration and by the melting beauty of the final cadence.

Mascarade captures the bustle and kaleidoscopic colour of the bal masqué. The orchestration is vivid - Roussel employs an extensive percussion section, including triangles, tambourine and castanets. The rhythms are vigorous and the texture dense. The melodic ideas are varied, ranging from the energy of the violin melody at fig. 11 to the languor of the tune for muted trumpet at the più allegro. At fig. 1

the device of canon, which occurs in most of Roussel's works of this period, is applied to suggest the raucous babble of voices. The strong impetus of the movement is reduced in the concluding bars, and the music dies away, as in the Concert, on a tonic discord.

For the student of Roussel's mature technique the Petite Suite, by reason of its compression and variety, provides a convenient and comprehensive manual of the composer's harmonic vocabulary. Roussel's distinctive chord structure has commanded more critical attention than other aspects of his idiom, especially from such French authorities as Nadia Boulanger and Arthur Hoérée. The principal features usually referred to are as follows: (1) the modification of the triad by chromatic alteration or substitution, or by addition; (2) the use of chords of the eleventh and thirteenth; (3) the elaboration of the harmony by appoggiaturas, auxiliary notes and extraneous pedals.

The application of all these procedures can be illustrated from the Petite Suite. In the eighth bar of the Aubade, D# replaces Eb in the tonic chord of A major (Ex. 24). The use of eleventh and thirteenth chords is also to be seen in the opening bars

of the Aubade. Each of these bars consists of a tonic chord for eight quaver beats and a dominant for the last two quavers. In the first twelve bars four different forms of dominant chord appear. In the first four, the chord is a dominant seventh with the third and fifth flattened; bar five contains a dominant minor ninth with flattened fifth; bars six and seven a dominant minor thirteenth; and bars eight, nine and ten a major seventh with a raised fifth (Ex. 25). (Alternatively these chords may be analysed as a dominant note E, with the addition of a leading note seventh on G \sharp , a chord of E \flat major, a chord of F minor plus D \sharp , and a chord of A \flat major respectively.) These harmonies are derived from the movement of the trumpet melody, and their increasing complexity contributes to the rise in tension. Such dissonant combinations are not confined to dominant harmonies; at fig. 2, for example, there is a tonic eleventh with a minor ninth (Ex. 26).

The elaboration of a chord by appoggiaturas occurs frequently. In the bar after fig. 10, prolonged appoggiaturas A \sharp , G \sharp , D \sharp , F \sharp modify the basic E minor chord. The intensification of a chord by

semitonal doublings, another typical procedure, is effected at fig. 13, where a combination on A with a strong dominant character consists of G \sharp , G \sharp , A \sharp , Bb, D \sharp and E \sharp . An inverted pedal, foreign to the chordal progression, occurs at fig. 3 (Ex.27).

Such procedures give Roussel's music a very personal harmonic flavour, as French writers point out. Yet it must be emphasised that vertical colouring is by no means the sole factor or even the most important one to be considered in forming any aesthetic judgment of a musical composition. There are numerous great works whose chordal idiom is on the whole unremarkable: on the other hand, piquant harmony will not save a piece of music whose formal structure is inadequate. So Roussel's harmony, like that of every composer, must always be considered in its relation to the overall harmonic and formal pattern of the work.

Roussel, though no Chauvinist, was proud of his Flemish ancestry, and in 1936 he composed his Rapsodie Flamande, (op.56), based on five Netherlands folk-tunes quoted in Ex. 28 - Ex. 32. The musician in this country might be misled by the title. The improvisatory rather than the dramatic

connotation of the word 'rhapsody' has been seized upon by some British composers, and made a pretext for works whose rather aimless meanderings are intended to express introspective meditation. Roussel's conception is much more virile, and his construction is taut and logical. The tonal scheme has a symphonic stability, as a synopsis of the main stages of the work will show. Introduction, establishing G as the tonic, and anticipating the first motive of theme I, which is later an important unifying factor. Theme II, announced by the oboe and trumpet in G minor, with Aeolian inflections. Theme III in Bb major. Theme I in its entirety, in D minor, forming the climax to the first part of the work. Theme IV in Eb major. Theme V in G major. Recapitulation of themes I and II in G minor, bringing the work to a flamboyant conclusion. These stages are linked by concise developments of rhythmic or melodic motives from the theme. The orchestration throughout is suited to the varying character of the material, and Roussel is able to adapt his harmonic idiom to the diatonic implications of the folk-tunes without loss of pungency.

In the Rapsodie Flamande, by turns truculent

and merry, martial and lyrical, Roussel conveys the spirit of Flanders as successfully as Ravel evokes that of France's southern neighbour in the Rapsodie Espagnole.

Roussel's last orchestral composition, the Concertino for 'cello and orchestra (op.57), also dates from 1936. In C major, it contains three movements, of which the last two are connected.

The difficulties of balance arising from the association of the relatively small-toned 'cello and the full orchestra are well-known, and have deterred many composers from attempting the medium. There are three main lines of approach to this problem, and the composer may adopt any one or any combination of them. He may, like Saint-Saëns, in his A minor concerto, treat the 'cello as an inferior violin, and write almost exclusively for its penetrating but thin upper register. He may follow Dvorak's example and employ the full orchestral tutti only when the 'cello is silent, accompanying the solo line lightly. Or he may reduce the size of his usual orchestra as does Elgar. Roussel was certainly not prepared to forgo the most characteristic and the richest part

of the instrument's compass, the G and D strings, and he uses the top of the A string with moderation. But he does confine his orchestral forces to strings, double wood-wind, two horns, two trumpets and timpani. Moreover, he is careful not to obscure the solo line, by leaving its immediate neighbourhood free, or by making some other compensatory adjustment. Thus, in the development section of the first movement, the 'cello presents a new cantabile melody marked p and dolce, in its middle register; this is accompanied by quiet wood-wind counterpoints in a higher octave, which do not interfere with its line. Again, at the opening of the adagio, the 'cello theme, while it is woven into the orchestral string texture, stands out as the other strings are muted. Even in the more vigorous and lively passages the soloist does not need to force his tone to dominate the orchestra.

The material of the Concertino is succinct, the forms condensed. The initial allegro moderato is in sonata-form, and the two subjects, one energetic with a strongly-marked rhythm, the other more relaxed and lyrical, are reversed in the recapitulation. The development includes the new theme already re-

ferred to. The only flaw in the construction of the movement is the passage linking the end of the exposition with this theme: the connection is artificial and is unrelated to the rest of the movement. The brief adagio leads directly into the final allegro molto, in rondo form. The solo instrument is not entrusted with the lively main theme until the beginning of the cadenza. Later in the cadenza the second theme is introduced as a counterpoint on the oboe.

This twelve-minute work is direct and immediately comprehensible. It does not demand a virtuosic technique either from the orchestra or the soloist, and, like the Sinfonietta, is accessible to good amateur performers. The work also exists in a version for 'cello and piano, arranged by the composer.

Roussel's oeuvre includes two pieces for military band and two more which use only brass and percussion instruments. Le Bardit des Francs and the Prelude to the second act of Romain Rolland's play Le Quatorze Juillet, are considered in the chapters on vocal and theatre music respectively. The brief Fanfare pour un Sacre Païen (without

opus number), scored for four horns, four trumpets, three trombones and three drums, was written in 1921 at the request of the English critic Leigh Henry, an admirer of Roussel's music, and it appeared in his periodical Banfare. More substantial is A Glorious Day (op. 48), composed for the president of the Association of American Bands in 1932. This work has the coherence and the tonal logic of a symphonic movement, and is based on three themes: an energetic, springing line for oboes and clarinets; a solid, ostinato-like bass motive; and a warmly-curving melody for saxophone. These themes are announced, expanded, and recapitulated in the home key of Bb major. As might be expected, in view of Roussel's treatment of the brass in his orchestral writing, the scoring is bold and exciting. In A Glorious Day he contrives to obtain brilliance of effect without sacrificing soundness of musical thought, and the rarity of this combination of qualities in music composed for this medium enhances the value of his contribution to the repertoire. Two versions of the work are published, one arranged for American, the other for French military band.

CHAPTER VII

Music for the Theatre

The term 'theatre music' is a comprehensive one, embracing several different categories of composition. Three of the most important of these - incidental music, opera and ballet - call for varying characteristics of sensibility and technique in the composer, and it is rare that one man excels in all three branches. With the reservation that any generalisation is less than the whole truth, this point may be illustrated by the case of Roussel's great French contemporaries, Fauré, Debussy and Ravel. Fauré is at his best when creating a particular atmosphere on a small musical scale, and is most successful in his incidental music (despite the substantial merits of Pénélope). Ravel, with his rhythmic vitality and acute visual awareness which he translates into music of sculptural precision, is a great composer of ballet. Neither of these has that dramatic flair, psychological perception and ability to organise complex material on a large scale which Debussy possesses and which put him in the front rank of operatic composers.

Roussel was an accomplished miniaturist, and he had undoubted dramatic gifts; but his incidental music

is rarely heard and none of his operatic works is

entirely satisfactory. On the other hand, his

dynamic rhythmic impulse, his powers of accurate

observation and his strong emotional response to

visual stimuli predisposed him to composition for

the ballet. His innate ability was developed and

brought to fruition by reflection and by careful

analysis of the special difficulties involved in

this genre of composition. To the October 1931

issue of the periodical Le Mois he contributed an

article on ballet music, notable for its practical

common-sense and for the light it sheds on Roussel's

adaptation of his own technique for the medium.

He begins by declaring that some knowledge of dancing

is as necessary to a ballet composer as contrapuntal

proficiency is to one working in symphonic forms,

and continues:

"That rhythm is an essential factor in

the composition of ballet is a universally

acknowledged truism. But it is quite another

matter to think that the pursuit of the most

complex rhythms, the more or less subtle com-

pounding of different rhythmic formulae, serve

any useful purpose or favour the cause of the

dance. For the translation of music into

terms of bodily movement in space is, in

essence, a function of the possibilities of

equilibrium - and moreover of harmonious

equilibrium - of these bodies; some ingeniously

contrived rhythmic figure, which would delight

was through incidental music. In 1908 he composed

Roussel's first contact with the theatre, however,

"Supreme in the concert hall, music is bound, in opera and to an even greater extent in ballet, to observe the conditions of the drama and the choreography she must illustrate. The endless variety of her means, the inexhaustible resources placed by her at the disposal of the composer who is master of his trade, allow her to give precedence, without suffering thereby, to that art which, by its aspirations towards the immaterial, its constant desire to escape from the physical realm, seems to tend towards music in order to acquire her spirituality".

suitable type of theme, Roussel concludes:

After discussing the place of mime and the most the study of the ballet and in its preparation." embroidery, would be a veritable hindrance in which does not stand out from its contrapuntal line which is too blurred in outline or one it may readily be imagined that a melodic dancer's memory, and automatically recalls to her the corresponding choreographic figure, with the rhythm, which is engraved on the able, for it is the melody, in association clarity of the melodic line is no less valued in the hand of the ballet master, the the rhythm constitutes an essential triumph "If, as I believe, the directness of

a concert audience, may only produce an imperfect and mediocre realisation on the stage, if the composer has not sufficiently studied and worked out its implications in choreographic terms, in relation to the overall scheme. The duration of the musical phrase, its punctuation, the disposition of its subordinate periods - all these elements may serve to assist the nimble feet of the dancers, or to stop them abruptly in their flight.

his Op.13, a score for Le Marchand de Sable qui passe, by the author and music critic G. Jean-Aubry. The text of this one-act conte lyrique in verse, of which three hundred copies only were published, is now unobtainable. According to the catalogue of Roussel's works, the fantasy presents three symbolic figures, 'Lui', 'Elle' and the shadowy 'Marchand de Sable', who awakens in them a realisation of their united destiny. The four short pieces in Roussel's suite are written for a chamber ensemble of flute, clarinet, horn, harp and strings. All in moderate or slow time, they are scored with delicacy and are subtle and ethereal in their suggestion. In melodic and harmonic idiom they derive from the Divertissement; but the texture is more contrapuntal (Ex. 33). Their unassertiveness and similarity of mood were undoubtedly in complete harmony with the insubstantial tale; however, these very qualities make the suite unsuitable for concert performance, and the music remains little known.

The experience of handling small orchestral forces gained by Roussel while writing Le Marchand de Sable was put to excellent use in his next work for the theatre. The commissioning, by Jacques Rouché,

of the ballet-pantomime Le Festin de l'Araignée (op.17) has already been mentioned. Roussel composed the score in the latter months of 1912 for an orchestra of double wood-wind, horns, trumpets, percussion, harp and strings.

The scenario of Count Gilbert de Voisins was inspired by Henri Fabre's Souvenirs Entomologiques. The scene is a garden, dominated by an enormous web, the lair of the spider. Ants swarm in, discover a fallen rose-petal, and with difficulty carry it away. The spider tests the strength of her web, and waits. Two beetles cross the garden. The industrious ants are attempting to remove another rose-petal when a butterfly appears. The spider entices the newcomer into her toils; the butterfly is trapped, struggles briefly, then dies, whereupon the spider removes the body of her victim from the web, wraps it in a grey cocoon, and expresses her joy in a triumphal dance. An apple falls noisily to the ground, interrupting her, and she returns to her web. By a stratagem two worms elude the defences of two fierce praying mantises who are guarding the fruit. The mantises, enraged by their defeat, quarrel and attack one another. Incited by the

spider, they too fall into the web and become her prisoners.

At this moment a mayfly breaks out of its chrysalis and dances with such charm and elegance that all the insects applaud. Then the two worms, considerably fatter, re-emerge from the apple and dance with the mayfly before it expires in its turn. The spider now begins to prepare her banquet; but she herself is slain by one of the praying mantises, who has been liberated by a beetle. The insects organise the mayfly's funeral, and their procession moves off. Night descends on the now deserted garden.

Such a plot inevitably lends itself to allegorical interpretation. R. Bernard sees in it 'a bitingly ironical portrayal of the appetites, the passions and the destructive folly of mankind, to which is opposed the carefree happiness of the poet, who runs to meet his ineluctable destiny without time for reflection'.⁽¹⁾ In a more general sense it could be considered as a vindication of the dictum that the most powerful reason is always the best one, or simply as a reminder of the vanity of human desires and activities. Whatever moral may be in-

(1) Bernard: op.cit., p.77.

ferred from it, the story, like all good fables, is compelling in its own right, apart altogether from its symbolic meaning. Roussel brings to life and animates his little universe with an almost uncanny certainty of touch. The gentle music of the prelude establishes its reality, and the same music dissolves it. Within these confines there is characterisation, drama and colour, all proportioned to the scale of the whole. The ruthless cunning of the spider contrasts with the innocence and gaiety of the butterfly, the feverish activity of the ants with the ponderous ferocity of the praying mantises. There is dramatic tension in the spider's efforts to lure her victims into her web, and humour in the clumsy dance of the replete worms. There is irony and cruelty; but there is also, in the obsequies of the mayfly, much dignity and pathos.

The means employed by Roussel to achieve his effects have the inspired simplicity of genius. For example, the entry of the ants is accompanied by a miniature march on the horns and wood-wind, combined with a quick ostinato figure, high on the violins. Nothing could more aptly illustrate the organisation and bustling energy of these tiny insects. At the

This is particularly ironical, as the orchestral

twentieth century musician of comparable stature.

is regularly performed than is the case with any other

to this day a smaller proportion of Roussel's output

criticised, and dismissed, for being unlike it, and

ation of the composer's music. His later works were

Festin has hindered rather than helped the dissemi-

score. Yet the universal acclaim which greeted Le

composer's personality is represented in this short

the work its unique flavour, and every aspect of the

acuity of observation, and detachment, which give

Roussel's blend of humanism, love for natural things,

peramental affinity with his subject matter. It is

is a consequence of the composer's complete tem-

In the last analysis the excellence of Le Festin

waltz.

brier maturity is conveyed by a tuneful and diatonic

chestration, while the joyous confidence of its

pictured by vague harmonies and fragmentary or-

The slow and painful emergence of the mayfly is

and the sombre colour of low strings and cor anglais.

monotonous rhythm, repetitive Phrygian harmonies,

is expressed by short, drooping melodic phrases.

other extreme, the mourning of the funeral party

suite by which the ballet is generally known omits about one-third of the total score, including the most powerful and violent sections, such as the triumphal dance of the spider and the conflict of the praying mantises.

After attending a performance of Lalo's ballet Namouna, Roussel wrote to Octave Maus on 31st March, 1908:

'As we were leaving the theatre d'Indy opined that "Something worth while could be done with the ballet nowadays". As you know I entirely agree with him, and I believe that opera-ballet or rather ballet with soli and chorus, could be a delight.....if only the poets would get down to it!(1)

This idea germinated in the composer's mind. His visit to India provided the theme, and Rouché's commission the occasion. At Roussel's request, Louis Laloy undertook the libretto, while he himself started work in 1914 on the musical setting of his Op.18, Padmâvatî, an opera-ballet in two acts. The libretto is based on the story of Padmâvatî, legendary queen of Tchitor. The first act takes place in the city streets. Aladdin, Sultan of the Mongols and arch-enemy of Tchitor, enters the city, ostensibly to conclude a treaty of friendship; his troops are

(1) Revue belge de musicologie, IV, 4: 1950. A. van der Linden, Albert Roussel et Octave Maus.

massed in the surrounding plain. He is received by Ratan-Sen, King of Tchitor. Aladdin desires some entertainment, and witnesses dances performed by the warriors, the slave-girls and, finally, after the Brahmin who accompanies him testifies to his conversion, by the women of the palace. Still unsatisfied, the Mongol ruler expresses his disappointment at not seeing Ratan-Sen's wife Padmâvatî, whose beauty is legendary. While the Brahmin intones a passionate chant extolling Padmâvatî, Ratan-Sen reluctantly summons the queen. She appears, and, at a sign from Ratan-Sen, disdainfully raises her veil, permitting Aladdin to look upon her, and then retires. Aladdin, overcome with emotion, withdraws from the city without signing the pact. The Brahmin remains to deliver a message from his master. If Padmâvatî is not surrendered to the Sultan, the city will be mercilessly attacked and obliterated. The enraged crowd throw themselves on the Brahmin, who, in a state of fanatical exultation, prophesies general destruction. The trumpets call the city to arms. The Queen comes into the deserted square and, seeing the corpse of the Brahmin, fears that the gods will abandon the city because of this sacrilegious murder.

Act II is set in the Temple of Siva. The defenders of the city have been annihilated and Ratan-Sen, wounded and desperate, begs and finally commands Padmâvatî to surrender to Aladdin, so that the people may be spared. The Queen refuses with indignation, and, in order to save her husband from the eternal consequences of such a betrayal of their sacred marriage vows, stabs him. She then prepares to die on his funeral pyre, and undergoes the ritual trials at the hands of the priests. The deities invoked are favourable, and bear the now transfigured Queen to the pyre. The doors of the temple burst open and Aladdin, frozen with horror, sees the flames consume the object of his desires.

From the dramatic standpoint, the flaw in this plot - and it is a fundamental one - is the purely external nature of the action. There is no psychological tension within any of the principal characters. Act II, containing the climax of the opera, focusses attention on the personality of Padmâvatî; yet her situation presents no dilemma for her, as she does not contemplate even for a moment any alternative course of conduct. The only character whose position is potentially dramatic, according to

Western conceptions, is Ratan-Sen, who is forced to choose between his love for his wife and his religious duty on the one hand, and his responsibility for the survival of his people on the other. But no reference is made to his personal crisis; his decision is taken for granted and in the second act he is merely a foil to Padmâvatî. Because of their lack of psychological depth, the leading figures never attain the reality of individuals, but remain two-dimensional symbols. Padmâvatî is the personification of superhuman devotion, Ratan-Sen that of human frailty. Aladdin represents hypocritical lust, and the Brahmin perverted fanaticism.

A second point of general application concerns the authors' chosen medium. In a programme note written for a revival of Padmâvatî, Roussel declared that it was the authors' intention to resuscitate the opera-ballet of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries by integrating the dance into the dramatic action. In fact, however, the earlier opera-ballet was essentially a spectacular, not a dramatic, production, and it is significant that its popularity greatly increased during the Regency, when public interest in classical drama and Aristotelian theory

was on the wane. In this art form, if the dance is not to detract from the dramatic action, it must have a central and not merely an accessory position in the action. To take a familiar example, Salomé's dance in Strauss's opera is the indispensable climax of the drama. In the case of Padmâvatî, the first three dances are intended to lead progressively up to the crucial appearance of the Queen. But there is no indication that Aladdin's repeated requests are motivated by anything less innocuous than a connoisseur's appreciation of a good performance, and any tension created in the mind of the spectator is dissipated by the interest of the dances themselves. The dance of the spirits in Act II occurs after the dramatic action is completed, as a supernatural postlude to it.

It cannot therefore be said that in Padmâvatî the ballet is fully integrated into the dramatic action, and the work may most accurately be described as a spectacle containing related dramatic scenes. Accepted on this basis Padmâvatî is an impressive achievement. Roussel performs the difficult feat of presenting this world, remote not only in time and place, but also in its assumptions and attitudes, with

sincerity and conviction. The dualism of the underlying religious beliefs is vividly projected in the antithesis of the two backgrounds to the action: the sunlit square and glittering palace of Act I, and the gloomy, bloodstained interior of the temple, dominated by the enigmatic figure of Siva, of Act II. The unfamiliar atmosphere is evoked by the prelude and the opening crowd scene. This kaleidoscopic scene is knit together, and suspense is created, by the repeated calls of the watchman announcing the stages of Aladdin's entry into the city. The varying emotions of the participants are characterised with a terse precision: the calm exterior and inner forebodings of the officials, the instinctive mistrust shown by the people, the ominous arrogance of Aladdin's escort, and the gentle grace of the unheeding maidens, preoccupied with their devotions to the goddess Ganesha.

The highlights of the work are the ballet scenes. All of them fulfil Roussel's own requirements in their rhythmic directness and their untrammelled melodic line, and at the same time each one is adapted to its special expressive purpose. The first two dances are in ternary form. That of the warriors is full

of energy and uncouth violence. These qualities are portrayed by the stumbling 5-4 and 7-4 rhythms; by the abrupt diatonic ostinato figure in the bass and its opposition to the long irregular curves of the chromatic melody (Ex. 34); by the harmonic dissonance; and by the remorseless upward surge of the music to its climax in each section. The dance of the slave-girls offers the complete contrast that Aladdin demands. The flowing modal melody, the regular phrase structure, the stable rhythm, diversified only by light cross-accents - all these convey the fleeting elegance of the dancers. The central episode, like that of the preceding dance, is a solo, and the sinuous, drooping melody and triplet rhythms are charged with a languorous melancholy.

The dance of the palace women is more extended than the two earlier ones. The voluptuous sensuality of the dancers is underlined by the interweaving strands of the wordless chorus (whose expressive power Roussel had already exploited in the Evocations) and by the fluctuating sonority. But the whole movement is controlled by a strong momentum and in the later stages by an ever-quickenning tempo which carries the dance forward to a culmination of passionate

intensity. The dance and pantomime of the Daughters of Siva in Act II comprise a sequence of short connected sections. Each phase of Padmâvatî's ordeal is musically delineated by a characteristic rhythmic or melodic shape. The hypnotic gyrations of Kali and Dourga around the Queen, for example, are accompanied by chromatic melody and harmony and supple rhythm (Ex. 35). Like the earlier dances, the sequence is cumulative in its effect, and the tension increases until the moment of Padmâvatî's horrified conjuration of the tempting spirits.

The remaining features of the work may be briefly summarised. Roussel makes some use of the leit-motiv; there are motives associated with the city, the army, the Mongols, Padmâvatî, Siva, battle, love and the marriage vows. Like Debussy, the composer adapts the technique to his own requirements, and the motives are introduced rather for their intrinsic emotional value than as a means of communicating dramatic and psychological complexities not explicit in the text. Roussel also follows Debussy's example in his treatment of the text, the greater part of which is sung in a recitative style. But the harmonic and rhythmic idiom of Padmâvatî is less flexible

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From the dramatic standpoint, the flaw in this plot - and it is a fundamental one - is the purely external nature of the action. There is no psychological tension within any of the principal characters. Act II, containing the climax of the opera, focusses attention on the personality of Padmâvatî; yet her situation presents no dilemma for her, as she does not contemplate even for a moment any alternative course of conduct. The only character whose position is potentially dramatic, according to

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This recitative is diversified by passages of a more distinctly melodic character, as for instance the proclamation of Gora, the chant of the Brahmin, the song of Nakanti and the lament of Padmâvatî in Act I. The song of Nakanti, written in the Dorian mode, is, according to Vuillemin, of Hindu origin. The other melodies make use of Hindu scale forms not common to the Western tradition. Thus the proclamation is confined to the scale of C \sharp D \flat E \sharp F \sharp G \sharp A \flat B \sharp . Padmâvatî's lament is based on the same scale, with F \sharp replacing F \flat . The incantation of the Brahmin uses the notes D \sharp E \sharp F \sharp G \sharp A \sharp B \sharp C \sharp . In each case the supporting harmony is derived from the same scale. The influence of Hindu scale forms is by no means limited to these examples, but affects the harmonic and melodic idiom of the whole work. The prevalence of diminished and augmented intervals, a consequence of the application of these scales, gives the music its distinctive harsh and exotic flavour. Roussel's own harmonic

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the dances of the nymphs and satyrs are among the finest pages of the score.

The inadequacies of the text and the unsatisfactory nature of the composite medium explain the neglect of La Naissance de la Lyre in its original version. But the most essential part of Roussel's contribution is contained in the symphonic suite extracted from the work, and it is in this form that the music is most likely to survive.

In 1927 ten composers (Auric, Delannoy, Ferroud, Ibert, Milhaud, Poulenc, Ravel, Roland-Manuel, Roussel and Schmitt) collaborated in the composition of L'Eventail de Jeanne, a one-act ballet in honour of the dancer Mme. Jeanne Dubost. Roussel's contribution, a slight but graceful Sarabande (without opus number), was written in April 1927.

Bacchus et Ariane (op.45), the first of Roussel's two ballets on classical themes, was composed in 1930 and received its première the following year. The choreography was by Serge Lifar, who also took the rôle of Bacchus, and costumes and décor were the responsibility of Georges de Chirico. Spessiwetzewa danced the part of Ariadne, Peretti that of Theseus.

The conductor was Philippe Gaubert.

The story, by Abel Hermant, is founded on the familiar myths of Theseus, Ariadne and Bacchus.

Theseus, returning to Greece with Ariadne and the youths and maidens whom he has rescued from the Minotaur, lands on the arid and deserted island of Naxos. The young Athenians celebrate their deliverance and perform a dance whose serpentine movements symbolise the Cretan labyrinth. Theseus mimes his duel with the monster. A weird figure shrouded in a black cloak appears among the rocks. Curious, Ariadne approaches him. He envelopes her in his cloak and she loses consciousness. The enraged Theseus and the young men fling themselves on the intruder, but recoil as the latter reveals his identity. He is none other than Bacchus himself. The god lays Ariadne on a natural bed in the rock, and imperiously orders Theseus and his companions to leave the island. The thunder and lightning of Zeus give point to his command, and the crest-fallen men retire in the direction of the shore. Bacchus now dances passionately round the recumbent Ariadne. In a dream she rises and joins in the dance, at the conclusion of which the god lowers

her once again to the ground and disappears.

At the beginning of Act II Ariadne awakens and, finding herself alone, climbs to the summit of the rocks. Looking seaward, she discerns the receding sail of Theseus' galley. Terrified, she attempts to throw herself into the sea, but falls instead into the embrace of Bacchus. Together they resume the dream dance. Their lips unite in a kiss which releases a Dionysiac enchantment, whereupon the island comes to life, and vine-wreathed fauns and maenads spring from among the rocks, crowding the scene. Two of them offer a golden goblet filled with grape juice to Ariadne. She drinks and, intoxicated, dances with mounting frenzy, first alone, then with Bacchus. The entire troop of followers joins in a Bacchanalia, while the god conducts Ariadne to the highest pinnacle and crowns her with a diadem of stars ravished from the heavenly constellations.

The subject-matter of Bacchus has inevitably invited comparison with Ravel's Daphnis et Chloë. There are some obvious correspondences; but the later work is in no sense an imitation of the earlier one. The two artists reach comparable

destinations by quite dissimilar routes. Broadly speaking Ravel's form is expansive, his rhythm flexible and his harmony caressing. Roussel condenses his material; his rhythm is taut and his chords astringent. Each composer is supreme in his own particular field of expression. There is nothing in Roussel to equal the sheer sensuous ecstasy of the climaxes in Daphnis, while the exquisite tenderness of the music inspired by the sleeping Ariadne is outside the scope of Ravel's sensibility.

No other ballet by Roussel illuminates so clearly the composer's observation that music can give precedence to and illustrate the dance without diminishing its own stature. In Bacchus, every phase of the story is musically delineated with a certain touch. The rejoicing of the adolescents is expressed in a dance whose ostinato bass and leaping melodic line suggest vigorous strength and youthful exuberance. In the mime scene a twisting and repetitive melody recalls the labyrinth, and Theseus' struggle is portrayed by a defiantly dissonant phrase thrown against a background of quick repeated chords. Bacchus is succinctly characterised (Ex. 38): it is not sur-

prising, nor is it inappropriate, that his theme should bring to mind Till Eulenspiegel, for the two individuals have much in common. In Act II Ariadne's repose is evoked by a texture of subtle transparency, and her terror by a modernised version of a time-honoured device, a succession of chords of the diminished seventh. Ariadne's solo dance is an instance of Roussel's ability to co-ordinate different elements in a sustained rise to a climax. The increasing abandon of the dancer is depicted by an intensification of the melodic line, by means of chromaticism, a progressive accelerando, a crescendo from pp to ff, and the expansion of a restrained texture to the sonority of the full orchestra. The exultant energy of the lovers' pas de deux is matched by the swaggering 10-8 rhythm, and the concluding Bacchanalia sweeps forward with ever-mounting excitement to the final apotheosis of Ariadne.

Roussel's score fulfils perfectly its function in relation to the ballet. At the same time (and herein lies the full measure of the composer's success) it is not dependent on its connection with the stage for its justification, and the two or-

chestral suites, which contain all the music of each act respectively, have an autonomous existence. This independence is largely the result of the composer's avoidance of merely picturesque detail, and of the uniform excellence of the musical ideas. But it is the logic of the tonal structure which knits the diverse material into a coherent unity. Consideration of Roussel's treatment of several important points will indicate the general level of his craftsmanship in this respect.

The ballet is in the key of A major. The introduction to Act I begins with a phrase (x) in this key. After eight bars a G \flat in the bass induces a cadence on to F major, in which key a new phrase (y) is announced, with an accompaniment derived from (x). But a discordant harmony soon forces a cadence on to D \flat major, and phrase (x) returns as at the opening. At the moment of resolution, however, the strong D \flat implication of the upper parts is contradicted by the bass, so the dissonance tension, instead of being released, is maintained. The release occurs, with dramatic impact, when the modulation corresponding to that of the ninth bar brings the music back enharmonically to A major for a triumphal restatement of

(y) in the home key. In this manner Roussel obtains tonal variety, while exploiting modulation in such a way as to establish his tonic key beyond doubt.

The opposing pole of tonality, and the key in which Act I ends, is Eb major. This key is not stated before the dance of Bacchus at the conclusion of the act. But its appearance is adumbrated in the first dance by some fifty bars of dominant harmony over a Bb pedal left unresolved. This preparation ensures its acceptance as the final tonality of the act. In Act II the key of A major is avoided until the final allegro molto. An emphatic dominant pedal fixes the tonal centre; but the resolution on to tonic harmony does not occur until the very last bars of the work. Thus the closing chord of A major is invested with an overwhelming force.

Bacchus et Ariane is not only one of Roussel's most flawless achievements. It ranks as one of the supreme masterpieces of the twentieth century.

In his last ballet Roussel turns from Greek to Roman legend. Aenéas (op. 54), ballet with chorus in one act and two tableaux, was composed at the

request of Hermann Scherchen for the International Exhibition staged in Brussels in 1935. It was written during March and April of that year and performed in July under Scherchen's direction, with choreography by Léonide Katchourowsky and decor by Hélène Scherbatow. The scenario and text are the work of Joseph Weterings.

Aeneas, pursuing his path to Latium, halts at Cumae to consult the oracle, represented by an enormous statue. The Sybil refuses to disclose the future, but conjures up the ordeals which Aeneas must undergo in order to fulfil his destiny. He must face solitude and must resist the temptations of sensual joys, the memories of his love for the tragic Dido, and the pleading shades of his former comrades in arms. All these ordeals he surmounts, and goes on to achieve his glorious destiny. Rome rises from the ground in all her splendour. Aeneas has divested himself of his personality and has become identified with the city he has founded, and with her people.

As usual, Roussel succeeds in establishing the appropriate atmosphere in the opening bars. In contrast to the rich introduction to Bacchus, the

rigorous counterpoint of the prelude to Aenéas implies austerity and strenuous effort. In Aeneas's dance of solitude, the persistent recurrence of the principal phrase, the dark minor harmony and the painful rise to the climax portray the hero's isolation and torment. The diversity of the temptations enables the composer to demonstrate his breadth of understanding and the variety of his technique. In the first scene the chorus urge Aeneas to enjoy the fleeting present; the sensuous melody of the women's choir recalls the pleasure of love, and the fever of gambling finds a musical expression in the precipitate rhythms and excited exhortations of the voices. The dance of Dido is charged with poignant grief intensified by the speaking chorus, who reiterate obsessively 'Carthage must burn! Destroy Carthage!' Aeneas's past exploits are represented by a warriors' dance. Here the ritornello form used by Roussel indeed suggests by association a bygone age; but the harsh violence of the harmonic idiom is wholly contemporary. In his last dance, Aeneas reveals his uncompromising fixity of purpose by rejecting in turn each of the temptations, evoked by quotations from the previous

sections. The speaking chorus proclaims the immortality he has achieved through his creation, and the ballet ends with a choral hymn glorifying the city, its founder, Aeneas, and the Pax Romana. The text is concise and direct, and Roussel expresses its pagan grandeur by his broad homophonic choral writing, the vigour of his rhythms and the brilliance of his orchestral palette.

Aenéas, like Bacchus, has a sound tonal structure which enables it to be performed in the concert hall. The tonic is C with a fluctuation of modes; this is the tonality of the opening and the conclusion, and also the predominant tonality in the sequence of 'harmful joys'. In accordance with the austerity of the theme, the tonal range is more restricted than is the case in Bacchus, and here the minor modes are prominent. The dance of solitude is in A minor, passing through E minor, D minor and C minor. That of Dido is in D minor, and D minor is in addition the tonal centre of the warriors' dance. The natural brightness of E major, the key of the dance of the maidens, is heightened by its relation to the prevailing minor harmony.

As a ballet, Aenéas has not attained the pop-

ularity of Bacchus. This may be attributed to a limitation in the scenario rather than in the music. The theme has not the universal appeal of that of Bacchus - acceptance of earthly pleasures provides better material for art than the renunciation of them, and a human god is a more sympathetic figure than a divine mortal. By definition Aeneas is more a symbol than a personality. Moreover the ideals he embodies are limited in their application. The glorification of Rome's military strength and her pacifying techniques, which is the climax of the work, is unlikely to arouse unqualified enthusiasm in our own age. This is particularly regrettable as the score contains some of Roussel's most noble and deeply-moving music.

Although the operetta Le Testament de la Tante Caroline (without opus number) was not produced until after Aen  as, it was composed in 1932 and 1933. The libretto, by Nino, is in the classic tradition of the Parisian operetta. Aunt Caroline, who during her lifetime has been shunned by her virtuous relatives because of her somewhat chequered career, leaves her considerable fortune to the first child born to one of her nieces within a year. If the time

limit is exceeded, the family will be disinherited. The nature of the ensuing intrigue may readily be imagined. In the end the legacy goes to an obliging chauffeur, discovered to be the illegitimate son of the only spinster among the nieces.

In undertaking a work of this character, Roussel was following notable precedents. Fortunately for the health of French music, the division between 'light' and 'serious' music has never been a rigid one, and the operetta repertoire includes, as well as the compositions of such specialists as Offenbach, Hervé and Lecocq, contributions from Bizet, Délibes, Chabrier and Poulenc. Roussel's conception of his task would be subscribed to by all of these musicians. Before the first Paris performance - which took place in March 1937 - he wrote in the newspaper L'Intransigeant: 'My work makes no claim to novelty; it simply aims at being clear, pleasant and accessible to all'.⁽¹⁾

Le Testament had, however, a cool reception, and the general reaction was summed up by the anonymous music critic of the same paper: 'It is apparent that Albert Roussel, who is instinctively drawn to the

⁽¹⁾ L'Intransigeant: 24th February, 1937.

learned intricacies of counterpoint, does not easily adapt himself to simplicity'.⁽¹⁾ Although this criticism is itself an over-simplification, it contains the essence of the truth. Roussel's failure in Le Testament is ultimately due to a temperamental incompatibility with the genre. His sense of humour was subtle rather than farcical, and his aristocratic approach to life precluded him from full participation in popular attitudes. So the music of his operetta lacks the uninhibited verve and melodic charm which make that of Poulenc, for example, so acceptable.

The potpourri overture is based on the principal themes of the operetta. Of the following numbers the ensembles and the concerted finales are the most successful; they have a spontaneity not to be found in the duos and solos.

The only available score is a piano reduction, defective in that it contains no stage directions; nor does it include a list of dramatis personae.

In 1936 Roussel collaborated with Ibert, Auric, Milhaud, Koechlin, Honegger and Daniel Lazarus in providing the incidental music for a production of Romain Rolland's drama Le Quatorze Juillet. Roussel

(1) L'Intransigeant: 12th March, 1937.

contributed the Prelude to Act II (without opus number). This act deals with the events of the night preceding the assault on the Bastille, and the music, scored for military band, portrays the uncertain agitation and conflicting emotions of the populace in the Faubourg St. Antoine. Out of the confusion emerges a threatening march; but this dies away, leaving a silence of ominous foreboding. Short though it is, the Prelude is a remarkable piece of evocative writing.

Elpénor (op. 59), a 'poème radiophonique', was published posthumously in 1947.⁽¹⁾ The text is the work of J. Vétorings. The music, scored for flute and string quartet, consists of a prelude and two short interludes, the final paragraph of the prelude being repeated at the conclusion of the poem. The restraint and delicate shading of the music are suited to this pastoral idyll. But the work as a whole is unremarkable.

Roussel also wrote the score for a film. This, however, is unavailable, as the film was unsuccessful and the composer did not wish his music to survive in any other form.

(1) For an account of the origins of the work, see N. Denuth: Albert Roussel, p.91.

CHAPTER VIII

Chamber Music

The French composer of chamber music in the nineteenth century was handicapped by the complete break in the development of his national tradition after the death of Rameau, and inhibited by the colossal achievement of the Viennese school in the same medium. The quartets and quintets of George Onslow and Henri-Napoléon Reber are for the most part pale imitations of those of Haydn and Mozart, and have long since been forgotten. In the early chamber music of Franck and Saint-Saëns the undigested influence of Beethoven and the German Romantics is all too apparent; neither composer as yet commanded the formal control necessary for the successful organisation of the large-scale designs he attempted, and rhetoric too often becomes bombast, and emotion sentimentality. It was only after 1870, when the national spirit was reasserting its independence in cultural as in political life, and artists in all fields were rediscovering, or rather recreating, the ideals of the eighteenth century, that there were clear signs of a return to a conception of the function of chamber music more in keeping with the French spirit and with traditional

precedent. The complexity of the origins of this largely unformulated tendency and the diversity of its products emphasises how deeply ingrained in the national consciousness is the precept that art must first and foremost give pleasure. Such widely differing works as the Franck Violin Sonata, the A major Violin Sonata and the two Piano Quartets of Fauré, Gounod's sparkling Little Symphony for wind instruments, and the frankly hedonistic String Quartet of Debussy, have this much in common; they are clear in their ideas and direct in their expression, and all have a high degree of sheer entertainment value.

Vincent d'Indy, too, made the important contribution to the general movement that might be expected from one who believed as passionately as he did in the Gallic virtue of clarity. As well as constructing works like the String Quartets, whose rather dry material and intricacy of form ensure that their appeal is primarily an intellectual one, he took time off more serious matters to write two compositions which differ markedly from these in the source of their inspiration. The Suite in D minor in the olden style for trumpet, two flutes and

string quartet, adopts, like the Saint-Saëns Trumpet Septet, the clear-cut dance forms of the eighteenth century, while the Chansons et Danses: Divertissement for wind instruments owes its origin to d'Indy's studies of the folk-melodies of his native Vivarais.

This dual conception of the nature of chamber music implicit in d'Indy's output was transmitted from teacher to pupil, and Roussel's chamber works fall, broadly speaking, into two categories. On the one hand are those works predominantly serious in content and extended in form, including the Piano Trio, the first Violin Sonata and the String Quartet. On the other are those of lighter character, such as the Divertissement and the Sérénade. This distinction, so striking at the outset of Roussel's career, becomes less applicable in his later works, as he manages to combine density of thought with directness and economy of expression.

His first extant chamber composition, the Piano Trio in Eb major (op. 2, 1902), provides a devastating illustration of the dangers inherent in slavishly following any system of composition. It is not surprising that the Trio won d'Indy's approval, for in it Roussel dutifully observes the cellular and

cyclic principles of construction as taught at the Schola. The standard transformations occur throughout the three movements, culminating in what Debussy in another context called the 'rendezvous des thèmes', yet ironically enough the work lacks cohesion and growth. Repetition replaces development, and rhythmically and tonally Roussel avoids neither of the extremes of monotony and of excessive and inconsequential change of direction. The piano part is over-elaborate, and dominates the texture all through. Of the three movements the slow one is the best, not only because it is the least pretentious, but also on account of its genuine lyric feeling. The later revision by the composer (in 1927) effected some improvements in the keyboard writing, but it did not alter the work in any important respect.

Roussel's next chamber work, the Divertissement for wind instruments and piano (op.6, 1906), is technically and aesthetically poles apart from the Trio. Stress has been laid by various commentators on the originality of this opus, and rightly so, as it is the first score in which Roussel's personality unmistakably declares itself, and in many ways it anticipates much that was written in France in the

1920's. But this originality lies in the manner of its realisation, not in the initial conception. The composition of d'Indy mentioned above, the Divertissement for wind instruments, was composed in 1898, just after Roussel became a pupil at the Schola, and it was publicly performed in the following year. The points of contact between the two works are so numerous as to suggest beyond all reasonable doubt that Roussel had at least heard d'Indy's Divertissement, even if he had not studied the score. A comparison of the two is of interest in establishing the extent of Roussel's debt to his teacher, and in revealing the direction in which his own impulses were leading. The fact that Roussel adds a piano to his group is in itself an indication of his appreciation of the new Impressionist techniques. He uses it with skill and economy, exploiting discreetly its percussive and harmonic possibilities in such a way that it does not alter the essential wood-wind character of the ensemble.

The opening of Roussel's composition and that of the second part of d'Indy's show obvious points of resemblance (Ex. 39 and Ex. 40). The perky melodies on the oboe are quite similar in their effect, and

both are set against an ostinato accompaniment. But the degree of harmonic tension in the Roussel is greater, and his use of the dominant ninth in a disposition that draws from it its most dissonant flavour, is typical of his personal adaptation of Impressionist harmony, and exemplifies his kinship with Ravel rather than with Debussy. Ravelian, too, is his use in this work of added seconds and sixths, and the central place of the interval of the fourth in his harmony and his melody. Not only is his harmonic vocabulary richer than d'Indy's; his structural procedures are more varied. There is not an unadorned perfect cadence in the home key anywhere in the work, and Roussel juxtaposes remote tonalities in a deliberately perverse way that must have astonished if not shocked the older man.

Both Divertissements achieve their declared object - to entertain - but not in the same way. Roussel's approach is the more sophisticated, and consequently his handling of his material is more subtle. His wit is closer to irony than to humour and his simplicity is disingenuous. Delicately poised between art and artificiality, reality and fantasy, the Divertissement belongs to that class of

French art which depends for its effectiveness on its essential ambivalence of attitude.

It seems more than probable that Roussel himself did not fully realise at the time the implications for his future development of the Divertissement, for he reverted to the principles and practice of the Piano Trio in the first Violin Sonata, in D minor (op.11, 1907-1908). This Sonata, dedicated to d'Indy, was highly praised by Blanche Selva, who gives a detailed analysis of it in La Sonate.

Posterity has not endorsed her estimate. The Sonata, like the Trio, is too long, its development too incoherent, and its inevitable apotheosis contrived and over-emphatic. Nevertheless it represents in some respects a notable advance on the earlier work. The basic ideas are of a much higher quality, even if they are too unscrupulously exploited. In the first movement, the strong opening melody (très animé) and its spare accompaniment, presage the later style (Ex. 41). The attempted integration of scherzo and slow movement is unsuccessful, for reasons which have already been discussed; but the opening, a flowing melody on the violin supported by a delicate ostinato accompaniment, is in itself

excellent. The principal theme of the finale has the graceful wit of the Divertissement, and its piquancy is stressed by the unusual combination of 5-4 and 4-4 rhythms (Ex. 42). There is, in fact, throughout the work, a contradiction between the composer's ideas, which are concise and musical, and the inflated structure imposed upon them.

Roussel may have been dissatisfied with his achievement. He revised the Sonata in 1931, making minor improvements, and when he returned to the field of concerted chamber music, after a long period of preoccupation with orchestral and theatre composition, his first major work was another Violin Sonata (op. 28, 1924). This second Violin Sonata, in A major, is a land-mark in his evolution. It shows the composer making his most serious attempt to reconcile the disparate elements in his style: self-contained musical ideas with sonata form, extended lyrical melody with rhythmic ostinati, tonal emphasis with modal freedom. It is hardly surprising that such a Herculean task was not achieved at one stroke, and although this Sonata is in every respect an improvement upon the earlier one, it is still not wholly satisfactory in its formal structure.

A consideration of the exposition of the first movement will serve to illustrate this general observation. The movement opens directly with a striding and passionate melody on the violin, supported by arpeggio figuration on the piano (Ex. 43). This opening is typical of Roussel's harmonic methods all through the work; the tonal point of reference is clearly defined by the persistently accented A in the bass, but both melody and accompaniment suggest a modal scale of $A\flat B\flat C\sharp D\sharp E\flat F\sharp G\sharp A$. The melody develops with increasing intensity for some thirty bars, then stops abruptly and is replaced by an ostinato figure of little melodic interest, which diminishes the initial thrusting impulse of the movement in spite of a directed increase in tempo. The second theme, in slower time, is an amusingly languid example of Roussel's occasional flirtations with jazz idioms; but it further reduces the forward impetus, restored later by some obvious pushing. Consequently the movement lacks any overall unity.

The slow movement is altogether more satisfactory. It is central in importance as well as in position, and establishes the broad ternary design

which Roussel was to use many times. Each section expands steadily from a quiet beginning to its climax, and the relationships between the climactic points is regulated, so that the middle one forms the peak of the whole movement. The opening melody derives expressive power from its modal alterations and those of its austere Faure'-esque accompaniment (Ex. 44). In the middle section the melodic line is transferred to the piano and assumes a characteristic oscillating outline against wide-spread chord patterns in the left hand and agitated figuration on the violin. The return is varied and elaborated, and re-establishes the comparative serenity of the opening before dissolving into one of Roussel's unexpected and beautiful cadences. In spite of a certain stiffness of construction (for example, in later works Roussel avoids the extension of a melodic line by exact sequential repetition), this movement marks the attainment by the composer of a new scale of emotional expression in his slow movements.

In the last movement Roussel retains throughout the compound time of 6-8 and 4-8, the rhythmic scheme to which he later returned in the Mascarade

of the Petite Suite. It is a Rondo with a spiky first idea and a more lyrical second one. Some of the writing is experimental, especially with regard to the texture. Already Roussel shows signs of that preoccupation with the lower register of the keyboard so evident in the Piano Concerto, with the result that the two planes of tone are not always entirely integrated. But the material is good, and it is treated with an appropriate conciseness.

In the year he wrote the Violin Sonata Roussel also composed the first of four chamber works in which the flute plays a leading rôle. Joueurs de Flûte (op. 27) for flute and piano, is a suite of four pieces, each of them portraying a mythical or fictitious flautist - Pan, Virgil's Tityrus, Krishna and M. de la Péjaudie, the hero of Henri de Régnier's novel La Pécheresse. These short sketches exemplify Roussel's skill as a miniaturist. Like Schumann, he had the imaginative ability to invent an epigrammatic and pictorially suggestive motif, and to develop it on a small scale without monotony or irrelevance. Each of these pieces is formally perfect, and together they are alternating in tempo

and vividly contrasting in character. Pan is florid and improvisatory; Tityre light and fleeting. Krishna is technically a minor tour de force. With the unimportant exception of an auxiliary note and two modulating bars, Roussel restricts himself to the Hindu mode form 'Shri', on A as tonic in the first and last sections (thus giving the scale A \flat B \flat C \sharp D \sharp E \flat F \flat G \sharp A already noted at the beginning of the second Violin Sonata), and transposed on to C in the central section. The resultant harmony, the undulating melodic line and the unusual 7-8 rhythm make this piece one of Roussel's most successful evocations of the Orient (Ex. 45). M. de la Péjaudie, on the other hand, is entirely European in its rollicking boisterousness.

The Sérénade (op. 30, 1925) for flute, violin, viola, 'cello and harp, illustrates Roussel's ability to adapt his technique to special circumstances. The overall conception of the Sérénade derives from an acute appreciation of the nature of the medium: characteristics which for some composers would be an intolerable limitation are a positive source of inspiration for Roussel. Neither

the flute nor the harp has a robust tone, and their range of emotional expression is restricted. But they blend extremely well with strings, and in association with a string trio they provide an inexhaustible catalogue of delicate colour nuances. So Roussel's melodic lines are less angular than usual, and his harmony more diatonic. His texture is light, but carefully balanced, where necessary by dynamic differentiation, and constantly new in the variety of its sonorities.

Formally the Sérénade continues the line of development begun in the second Violin Sonata, and in the first movement Roussel has profited by the experience gained in the earlier work. This sonata-form movement is more coherent, and its changes of tempo more logical, than is the case in the Sonata. A remarkable feature of the movement is the use of iso-rhythmic variation as a device for extending a melodic line. In the first section the following melodic variants of a constant rhythmic pattern appear successively (Ex. 46).

It is in the slow movement that Roussel's mastery of textural subtleties is most apparent. The ethereal delicacy of the long-drawn-out flute

melody in the opening section is underlined by the light pizzicato bass and by the contrast with the slowly-moving harmonies and repetitive rhythm of the violin and viola. The omission of the harp enables it to be introduced at the final cadence of the section with a magical effect. The warmer lyricism of the central section is obtained without any sacrifice of lightness in the texture; the flute now remains silent, and the wide-ranging melody on the 'cello's first string is supported by a broken octave pedal on the harp and arpeggios on the muted violin and viola. In the return the transposition of the opening theme to a lower octave of the flute and its embellishment with sinuous counterpoints in the upper compasses of the strings reveal in the melody an unsuspected expressive power.

For the presto finale Roussel departs from his usual rondo or sonata-form, and employs once again a ternary form with varied return. The movement is succinct and the material correspondingly light. Considerable use is made of ostinato figures and pedal points - indeed, these devices are prominent throughout the work and the music is

harmonically more static than is generally the case with Roussel. It is this absence of elaborate harmonic argument which allows the composer to concentrate his attention, and that of the listener, on colour and texture. At fig. 11 in the presto Roussel makes one of his rare excursions into the more esoteric fields of 'special effects'; the violin and viola have alternating glissandi in artificial harmonics. Like the second part of the earlier Divertissement, the presto creates an atmosphere of gaiety, appropriate as a conclusion to this light-hearted work.

The Trio for flute, viola and 'cello (op. 40) was composed in 1929 within a period of fifteen days. The comparative facility with which Roussel wrote on this occasion was not due to any slenderness of content. Without sacrificing sensuous appeal and delicacy of expression, the composer uses an idiom more concentrated and powerful than that of the Sérénade; the texture is more closely woven, the form more terse, the ideas more significant. In the initial allegro grazioso Roussel's increasing confidence in the handling of his schematised form is evident. The material is comple-

mentary, the harmonic and tonal structure logical, and the climaxes convincingly prepared and reached. In the recapitulation the original ideas are re-worked to achieve a nice balance between literal restatement and free variation. The texture is clear but not thin.

In the ternary adagio Roussel employs a more freely chromatic idiom, without thereby disturbing the general stylistic unity of the work. The instrumentation is skilfully varied and the three instruments share impartially the principal melodic line. The climaxes are carefully placed and the flow of the movement is never halted.

The finale, allegro non troppo, is a lively rondo dominated by the flute. Its most unusual feature is a central episode in which an extended flute melody in the lower register of the instrument is supported by arpeggio harmonics on the strings. In spite of the quality of its material this movement lacks the complete unity of the other two. Its episodes are too strongly opposed in character to knit together and some of the transitions are perfunctory. But these defects are of relatively small account in the context of the

whole work, and the spontaneity and freshness of the writing have assured for the trio a permanent place amongst Roussel's most popular compositions.

The last composition for the flute, the Andante and Scherzo for flute and piano (op. 51), dates from 1934. Each of the two sections of this short piece is well written; but there is a discrepancy between the harmonically complex idiom of the Andante and the more diatonic treatment of the Scherzo (Ex. 47).

Taken as a whole, Roussel's contribution to the repertoire of the flute, though small, is important and in some respects unique. The voluptuous and exotic characteristics have been more fully exploited by other twentieth-century composers: but no other musician has appreciated and revealed more clearly its gentle intimate poetry; none has used more effectively the clear yet subdued brightness of its middle register, nor defined more sensitively the subtleties of its limited range of expression.

In 1931, fresh from the composition of two of his largest works, the Third Symphony and Bacchus

et Ariane, Roussel began his String Quartet in D major (op. 45), and he completed it in the following year. Like Faure', Roussel eschewed the medium until his genius had fully ripened, and until he had a wide experience of writing for strings in other chamber combinations. This delay was undoubtedly intentional. In 1929, in reply to an enquiry sent out by Le Courrier Musical, he wrote: 'I have always considered chamber music to be the purest and most noble form of music. Is not the string quartet in particular the supreme test which reveals, honestly and artlessly, the merit of the musician, the quality of the music within him?'⁽¹⁾ And three years later, in the course of a moving tribute to the memory of his pupil Jean Cartan, he referred to 'this severe form, the quartet, which is music's most significant expression.....'⁽²⁾

Just as Faure's quartet is his most unpromisingly intellectual chamber work, so Roussel's contains no concessions to purely sensuous appreciation. Despite his use of the colouristic resources

(1) Le Courrier Musical, 15th March, 1929. Enquête sur l'évolution et les tendances de la Musique de Chambre.

(2) La Revue Musicale, May, 1932. Jean Cartan, by Albert Roussel.

of the medium-pizzicato, mutes, natural and artificial harmonics, exploitation of the less familiar sonorous combinations - colour is always strictly subordinated to the exigencies of intellectual expression. The overall form of the quartet in itself indicates the seriousness of the composer's intentions; he abandons his favourite three-movement formula and writes four movements, making the last one the climax of the others.

The opening movement, a concise and forceful allegro, is in sonata-form. The exposition contains the customary two ideas, contrasting in character and tonality; the development treats this material in the same sequence as it appears in the exposition, and the recapitulation repeats it in new guises. Thus the movement falls into three sections, the second two being variations of the first. A method of development common in the condensed movements of the later works is typified by the three versions of the second subject (Ex. 48). Here the development proceeds, not by disintegration or synthesis of the material, but by varied restatement of the ideas, which are enhanced by new contrapuntal associations. The movement ends with a short coda

insisting on the rhythm of the opening bar.

The adagio, in Bb major, follows the familiar ternary pattern. Melodic angularity and contrapuntal complexity are employed for the expression of intense emotion. The middle section illustrates Roussel's individual use of bitonality, discussed in a previous chapter. Throughout this passage the two lower instruments insist on the tonic and dominant chords of Db; the violins begin in a freely modal E, gradually moving towards the tonality of Db, which they finally accept at the end of the section.

A point of general application to the composer's technique may be conveniently dealt with here. Mr. Mellers, in his essay on Roussel, says:

'Roussel essentially thinks in polyphonic terms, as is inevitable if his polymodal conception of line is to attain free expression. It follows that his music depends much less than Fauré's on tension between melody and bass: with him all the parts tend to be of equal significance, and the convention of the 'harmonic' bass is alien to his idiom.... Roussel's basses have an importance equal to but by no means greater than that of his middle parts.'(1)

Such a statement derives from a misconception of the nature of Roussel's musical language. In

(1) W.H. Mellers: Studies in Contemporary Music; Albert Roussel and La Musique Française, p. 82.

all music governed by harmonic principles, the lowest part - the 'bass' - has a special status in that the harmony is determined by the intervallic relationships of the upper parts to it. In music in which tonality plays a structural rôle, that is to say in most music written since 1600, the bass becomes even more important, as it is the principal factor in defining a tonal area. Roussel, as we have seen, never rejects the traditional conception of tonality as the foundation of musical structure, and therefore his lowest parts have this special significance as basses. In the case of the opening of the movement under consideration, for example, the three upper parts only make harmonic sense through their relationship to the 'cello line, as the experiment of inverting this with any of the other three will conclusively demonstrate (Ex. 49). It is of course a corollary of this property of defining tonality that a bass may be constructed which induces tonal uncertainty. It may even contradict a very strong tonal implication in the upper parts. Both these procedures are used by Roussel when desirable. Such passages do not,

however, invalidate the conclusion that Roussel's lowest parts have a special function, as basses, in the common acceptance of the term.

The scherzo, in D minor, is characteristic in its rather acid gaiety, and calls for no detailed comment.

The final allegro molto is a fugue, and is indeed the most extended example of this form in Roussel's music. This fact in itself gives the movement a particular interest, in view of Gigout's often-quoted remark that this pupil had 'the genius of fugue'. The subject, with its striking rhythm and angular contour, is a forceful and memorable one (Ex. 50). The exposition and the succeeding episodes and entries are well-conceived; skilful use is made of inversion, stretto, and ostinati growing out of the subject. But the extended peroration in D major, with its transformations of new and irrelevant material, its predominantly harmonic texture and its over-emphasis on the home key, does not sustain the interest, and proves that Roussel's fugal technique derives from the maître of Ste. Clotilde rather than from the Cantor of Leipzig. This weakness is, however, outweighed by the out-

standing qualities of the quartet - the strength of the opening movement and of the first part of the last one, the lyric intensity of the adagio and the liveliness of the scherzo.

Roussel's last completed work, the String Trio (op. 58), was inspired by the playing of the Pasquier Trio, to whom it is dedicated, and was composed in June and July of 1937. Despite the precedents of Mozart's magnificent Divertimento in Eb and Beethoven's astonishingly mature Op. 9 Trios, the medium was almost completely ignored by nineteenth-century composers. Our own century has seen a notable revival of interest in the special problems of string trio composition, and a wide variety of solutions is contained in the trios of such men as Hindemith, Schoenberg, Webern, Milhaud, Françaix, Moeran and Lennox Berkeley. Roussel's contribution is free from any rigid preconceptions. For the most part the musical ideas are conceived in three contrapuntal strands, which together form a completely satisfactory texture (Ex. 51). But Roussel, like Mozart and Beethoven, does not hesitate to obtain textural contrast by exploiting the possibilities of double-stopping when

a fuller sonority is desirable.

In this trio the composer reverts to his three-movement disposition. The first movement is a graceful and flowing allegro moderato in sonata-form. Mr. Demuth's remark that 'it would sound equally well if played andante instead of allegro moderato'⁽¹⁾ is inexplicable.

In fact the music determines its own tempo within the usual narrow limits, and the composer's own metronome marking ($\text{♩} = 96$) is the natural tempo for the movement. In the recapitulation the subjects appear in reverse order, and are treated as usual with new harmonisation and instrumentation. The broadening of the harmonic rhythm and the tonic and dominant pedals which precede the coda ensure that the final close of this short movement occurs at precisely the right moment.

The middle movement, an adagio in F major, is once more the emotional centre of the work. The inexorable progress from climax to climax, the powerfully expressive melodic lines, the superbly controlled variations in harmonic intensity and implication, the masterly handling of the instruments and the blending of their tone-colours - all

⁽¹⁾ Norman Demuth: Albert Roussel, p.127.

of these give this movement a force and intensity unequalled in the whole range of Roussel's chamber music, and, if allowance is made for difference of scale, unsurpassed anywhere in his output.

The finale, a free rondo in gigue rhythm, is gay, vigorous and immediately comprehensible. The texture is less contrapuntal than that of the preceding movements, and the main melodic interest lies in the violin part. Like the first movement, it is concise, yet perfectly balanced.

Together the three contrasting movements make a convincing unity, and the whole work, written under conditions of physical weakness and suffering, is a witness to the composer's indomitable spirit, and remains one of his finest achievements.

After the String Trio Roussel projected a trio for oboe, clarinet and bassoon, for which he wrote a slow movement before his death. This Andante for an unfinished wind trio (marked, curiously enough, adagio) was published as a supplement to the memorial issue of the Revue Musicale in November 1937. According to the express desire of the composer this movement is not to be publicly performed, and it contains no dynamic

or phrase marking. More severe than the corresponding movement of the String Trio, it gives no indication of a decline in creative energy.

The list of Roussel's works for chamber ensemble is completed by mention of a Pipe In D Major (without opus number), a miniature piece for the French flageolet in a collection published by L'Oiseau-Lyre in 1934, containing contributions by various composers; and a Duo for bassoon and 'cello or double-bass (also without opus number), dedicated to Koussevitsky and first published by Durand in 1945. The Aria, which is arranged for different wind and stringed instruments, is a transcription of the Vocalise No. 2, referred to in a later chapter.

CHAPTER IX

Piano Music

Some of the world's finest string and wind music has been conceived by composers who did not themselves play any orchestral instrument. But the most important contributions to the repertoire for solo pianoforte are those of musicians who have had an intimate first-hand knowledge of the instrument, while composers with moderate or slight pianistic ability have written comparatively little for the medium, or avoided it. Roussel, who was an adequate but by no means a virtuoso performer, is no exception to this general rule, and his music for piano occupies a minor place in his production. Its value may nevertheless be underestimated. It has been said that Roussel's scoring for the piano is clumsy and ineffective. This apparent awkwardness, however, is often, if not always, the legitimate and inevitable expression of his musical thought, and no less eminent an authority than Cortot has pointed out that what may appear unduly complicated to the performer of Roussel's works is quite clear to the listener.⁽¹⁾

(1) A. Cortot: La Musique Française de Piano. Troisième Série: Albert Roussel. P.118.

There is nothing at all unconventional about the style of Roussel's Op. 1, written in 1898; its full title is Des heures passent.....graves, légères, joveuses, tragiques, champêtres. This early attempt at musical impressionism does not fulfil the promise of its comprehensive title, for the student composer hardly ventures beyond the confines of a pallid and academic idiom. The first two 'hours' are represented by the opening movement, whose slow chromatic introduction is followed by a perfunctory waltz, marked allegretto scherzando. Another allegretto, this time of a more robust character, portrays the hours of joy. The third movement, assez lent, is harmonically more adventurous than its fellows, and its insistent inverted pedal, slow harmonic changes and empty sonority do at least suggest solemnity, if not tragedy. The finale, Champêtres, is in the form of a two-part fughetta and manages to achieve a rather stilted gaiety.

Despite the colourless anonymity of most of the writing, there are signs here and there of a nascent musical personality. In Ex. 52, for instance, the false bass at the cadence is a sur-

prising and, in its way, a prophetic departure from orthodoxy. But such incidents, however interesting they may be from an historical point of view, cannot impart any artistic significance to this premature venture into the permanency of print.

In 1904 Roussel wrote a short piece entitled Conte à la poupée (without opus number), which was published in the Album of the Schola. This private publication is now unobtainable. The title of the piece, and its duration (three minutes) support the inference that it is of slender content.

The enormous advance apparent in Roussel's next work for piano, the suite Rustiques (op.5, 1904-1906), is probably to be ascribed in equal measure to d'Indy's instruction and to the composer's maturing artistic vision. Rustiques was directly inspired by the countryside of the Île de France, where Roussel was living during these years. Like the contemporaneous Poème de la Forêt, it reveals the composer's sensitivity to natural beauty and demonstrates his ability to translate his reactions into musical terms.

The Suite contains three movements: Danse au

bord de l'eau; Promenade sentimentale en forêt;
Retour de Fête. The opening ostinato figure of the Danse translates the movement of water into a flowing 5-8 rhythm, made still more supple by the triplet group in the second part of each bar (Ex. 55). The elegant dance of the water-nymphs is delineated in the graceful curves of the melody. Later in the movement the changes of tempo and of time signature add to the mobility and fantasy of this evocation.

If the use of fourths melodically and harmonically in the Danse announces the idiom of the Diversissement, the Promenade is closely related to Soir d'été. Like the symphonic movement, it is in ternary form, with a picturesque first section and a more lyrical second one. The harmonic and rhythmic structure of the Promenade is also akin to that of Soir d'été; the long melodic line is supported by syncopated inner parts, and the harmony enriched by auxiliary notes (Ex. 54).

In its formal lay-out Retour de Fête also anticipates the Diversissement. The vigorous opening theme, with its alterations of rhythm and its short repetitive phrases, conveys the animation

of a village dance. An interlude, nostalgic and melancholy, momentarily interrupts the bustling activity. Finally the revellers disperse, and after a reminiscence of the interlude the movement dissolves on an inconclusive dominant ninth (Ex. 55).

In this suite Roussel is beginning to develop his personal pianistic idiom, and the problems confronting the player here are similar in essence, if not in scope, to those of his later works. In the first movement the accompaniment figure which is divided between the hands must be effortlessly smooth and subordinated to the more expressive melody. The complex texture of La Promenade demands a careful control of nuance in the inner parts, and a differentiation between simultaneously presented planes of tone. Retour de Fête calls for frequent overlapping and interlocking of the hands.

Rustiques is imaginative and poetic in conception; but it is weakened by some technical uncertainty, in particular by the abrupt changes of style within the several movements. The Suite in F \sharp minor (op. 14) shows a much more sure command of technical resources. This suite was begun in 1909

and completed after Roussel's Asian tour, in 1910. The dated manuscript of the Prélude proves that it was written before the composer's departure. But for this evidence it might be assumed that it was composed after his return; the modal harmonies and the mood of sombre violence, without precedent in Roussel's work, foreshadow the technique and spirit of Padmâvatî. The movement is designed in a massive arc. It expands from the pp bass figure of the opening, broadening by successive stages to the fierce fff climax, and then contracts until only the initial figure remains, and this finally disintegrates. There is conflict implied in the contrasting phases of the melodic line; but a remarkable degree of concentration and unity results from the predominance of the initial motive, which remains recognisable through its many elaborations (Ex. 56). The correspondence of the end and the beginning invests the movement with the unreal but none the less terrifying intensity of a nightmare.

In the Sicilienne the unifying factor is the gentle persistence of the traditional dance rhythm in the accompaniment. A mood of intimate lyricism is communicated by the quiet melody and the sensuous

adornment of the harmony in the inner parts. The phrasing is subtly varied and the restrained sonorities of the keyboard are delicately managed (Ex. 57).

The Bourrée is not of the familiar duple-time type, but is modelled on the lively triple-time dance of that name, common in Auvergne. (An authentic example is used by d'Indy in his Jour d'été à la montagne.) Roussel's movement is ternary, with a short introduction and coda. The preliminary chords exemplify the increasing dissonance of his harmony (Ex. 58). The first section is based on a typically square-cut bourrée melody (Ex. 59): on its return, this section is varied and amplified. The contrasting central episode, un peu moins vif, is more stylised, and here again Roussel obtains pungency of harmony by elaboration of conventional progressions (Ex. 60). The concluding bars illustrate an expansion of a dominant harmony by note alteration and substitution.

The final Ronde is the least satisfactory movement in the work. The principal seven-bar theme is direct in its first appearance, but subsequently it is overlaid and obscured by a mass of

irrelevant detail. In his striving after brilliance of keyboard effect Roussel has sacrificed musical coherence, and the clumsiness of the writing is not in this instance redeemed by an expressive justification.

Considered in relation to Roussel's artistic evolution, the Suite in F \sharp minor may be defined as an exploration of new fields of emotional communication, leading to an enrichment of the composer's harmonic language. In the Sonatina (op. 16), composed in 1912, Roussel consolidates his harmonic gains, and attempts a transformation of the formal moulds which he has inherited and applied in his earlier chamber music. The work is in two parts; the first combines a sonata-form movement and a scherzo, the second a slow movement and a rondo. In the first part the lyrical modéré has the usual two subjects of sonata-form. There is no development, and the recapitulation leads without a break into the scherzo marked vif. The principal theme of this section derives from the preceding second subject, and the trio introduces a variant of the first subject. In this way the two sections are thematically linked. But they do not constitute

an entity; each movement remains distinct in tonality (the modéré is in B minor, the vif in Gb major), in texture and treatment.

The second part is formally more successful. The tonality of both sections is B major, and the 5-8 rhythm is maintained throughout. The très lent is not a self-contained movement; it adumbrates the thematic material of the second section, and by means of an *accelerando* merges imperceptibly into the rondo. The material of the rondo is itself reminiscent of the themes from the first part of the Sonatina, and the concisely worked section has a vigorous rhythmic impulse.

In the scoring of the Sonatina Roussel avoids the more extreme difficulties of the Suite in F# minor. But the style remains personal, and a subtle control of the keyboard is necessary if the musical meaning is to be made clear. Even such an excellent interpretative artist as Blanche Selva was misled by the printed score, when she reproached the composer for the 'harshness of the harmonic combinations', and condemned in particular the opening of the Sonatina for the 'wrong-note' harmonisation. If this passage is examined, it will be observed

that the basic harmony, as defined by the relationship of the melody and the bass, is clear and straightforward (Ex. 61). The dissonances are provided by the appoggiaturas and passing notes of the inner parts. In performance it is essential that these parts should be played in a manner which conveys their purely decorative function; that is to say, without emphasis, and on a lower dynamic plane than the melody and bass. If this is achieved, the effect will be to enhance and not, as Blanche Selva asserts, to destroy, the beauty of the ensemble.

The Sonatina remains an isolated work in Roussel's oeuvre, and the composer may have considered his formal experiment to be unsatisfactory, as he did not subsequently enlarge upon it. Nevertheless, the piece is attractive; its ideas are fresh and memorable, and the absence of a d'Indy-type development is a matter for gratitude rather than disappointment.

The Petit Canon Perpétuel (without opus number), dating from 1913, is slight, but well written. The canon is at the fifteenth between the extreme parts, and the free middle voice completes the texture

and adds piquancy to the harmony.

Doute was composed in 1919 and published the same year in the Feuillets d'Art. The tortuous chromatic lines and semitonal dissonances of this short piece illustrate the title, and the concluding augmented fourth leaves the uncertainty unresolved. It is characteristic of the composer that the chromaticisms are firmly related to a tonal background by the outline of the bass progression (Ex. 62).

In 1920 the directors of the Revue Musicale invited leading contemporary composers to contribute to a Tombeau de Debussy, which was published as a supplement to the magazine in December, 1920. The cosmopolitan nature of the collaboration is in itself a tribute to the great Frenchman. The contributors include Bartok, Manuel de Falla, Goossens, Malipiero and Stravinsky, as well as Dukas, Ravel, Roussel, Satie and Schmitt. Roussel's respect for Debussy is apparent in his writings, and his own offering, a piano piece intitled L'Accueil des Muses, is a moving and personal one. The slow curves of the melody and the intense harmonies betoken a grief whose poignancy is not concealed by its restraint of

utterance.

It was for another 'Tombeau' that Roussel returned to composition for solo piano after a lapse of twelve years. The Fugue on B.A.C.H. appeared in the supplement to the Revue Musicale of December, 1932. Roussel added a Prelude in 1934, and the opus number 46 was assigned to the work. This composition as a whole suffers from an inconsistency of style, epitomised by the fugue subject itself (Ex. 63).

The composer's attempt to impart novelty to an overworked formula has precedent, and by changing a minor second to a major seventh he obtains a striking opening figure. The third bar is, however, an anticlimax; it is melodically and harmonically redundant, and implies a much more diatonic treatment than does the opening of the subject. The subsequent development confirms this contradiction. The three-strand contrapuntal texture is soon abandoned, and the harmony is alternately strong and commonplace. The Prelude is in a more astringent idiom which does not match that of the fugue (Ex. 64).

Roussel's last complete composition for the

piano, the Trois Pièces (op.49), was written in 1933. The first piece, allegro con brio, is in the composer's most truculent vein. It is scored in a heavy percussive manner, and its interest lies in its accumulative rhythmic patterns rather than in its melodic or harmonic detail. The following allegro grazioso is a lilting waltz, whose melodic charm and harmonic subtlety combine lyricism and irony. The last piece is ternary in form. The opening allegro con spirito is lively, but its matter is slight. The central andante is introspective in its mood. It reaches a climax of great power, which bursts the formal mould and underlines the stylistic disparity of the two sections of the piece.

Three isolated compositions for other solo instruments may be mentioned here. The Impromptu for harp (op. 21) dates from 1919, and is an important addition to the literature of that neglected instrument. Roussel always treated the harp with sympathetic understanding, and here he reveals its poetic qualities. The Impromptu creates an appropriate impression of spontaneity; yet it is solidly constructed, being in fact a sonata-form

movement without development. The first subject, based on one of the composer's favourite scale-forms, $F\sharp G\sharp A\flat B\sharp C\sharp D\flat E\sharp F$, has the flavour of an exotic dance, and contrasts with the cantabile phrases of the second idea. The piece is rounded off by a reference to the introduction.

The same insight into the medium characterises Segovia (op. 29, 1925), a short composition for guitar dedicated to the famous virtuoso. This evocative piece alternates the rhythm of the waltz with that of the bolero, and is both charming and witty.

The Prelude and Fughetta for organ (op. 41) was composed in 1930. Unexpectedly, Roussel appears to be inhibited in his approach to the king of instruments. The Prelude is undistinguished, and the dullness of the Fughetta subject is not redeemed by any subsequent originality of treatment. A version of this work has been arranged for string orchestra by F. Goldbeck.

CHAPTER X

Vocal Music

1. Choral Music.

French composers, lacking that dubious asset, a national choral tradition, have tended to neglect the larger forms of choral composition. Roussel used a chorus in Evocations, Padmâvatî and Aenéas, and at one stage he contemplated writing a choral symphony. But his oeuvre includes only one major and two lesser works in which the chorus plays the leading part.

The two four-voice madrigals composed in 1897 were not published. The manuscript copies cannot now be traced, and were probably destroyed by the composer.

Madrigal aux Muses (op. 25), for three female voices, was composed in 1923 to a text of Gentil-Bernard which is slight and archaic in character. Roussel's setting is deceptively straightforward. The miniature form is superbly handled, the writing is smooth, and colour is obtained by contrasts and by vocalisations.

Le Bardit des Francs (without opus number), written in 1926, is scored for four-part male chorus, with an ad libitum accompaniment of bass and percussion.

The text of this 'bardit' or battle-chant is extracted from the sixth book of Châteaubriand's Martyrs: it is intoned by forty thousand Franks, led by their king Pharamond, before their clash with the Gallo-Roman armies on the plains of Batavia. The chant exalts the valour and ferocity of the Frankish warriors and their leader, and anticipates a bloody conflict. Roussel matches the savage heroism of the text by essentially simple means. The vocal writing is mainly homophonic, and the rhythms are direct and vigorous. The instrumental scoring is vivid, and if the addition of brass and percussion modifies the starkness of the unaccompanied chorus, the increased sonority gives the work an even more dramatic impact in performance.

Psalm 80 (op. 37), for tenor, chorus and orchestra, was composed in 1928 and performed in the following year as the climax to the anniversary festival in Paris. The text is the English one of the Revised Version. Although Roussel later provided an alternative French text, adapted from the Second translation, he preferred that the work should be sung in English, and undoubtedly the terse vigour of the English prose conveys more strikingly than

the French rendering the spirit of the original.

The psalm is not personal, but collective in its expression; it is the desperate appeal of an oppressed people to Jehovah for comfort and succour. The initial invocation of the Shepherd of Israel ends with the refrain: 'Turn us again, O God, and cause thy face to shine; and we shall be saved'. The sorrows of Israel are described and the refrain is repeated. The psalmist then adopts the symbol of the spreading vine to recall the former glorious expansion of the Chosen People, to which he contrasts their present abject condition. He makes a final plea to Jehovah to restore the nation, ending with a reiteration of the refrain.

Roussel's setting provides another illustration of the observation that, while he did not write to any system, the composer's methods are not arbitrary. In this instance the richly varied technical procedures are strictly related to the expressive exigencies of the text. The natural divisions of the psalm itself suggest the broad musical structure. Although the setting is continuous, it falls into four parts, each corresponding in general character to a symphonic movement.

The unanimity of the introductory prayer 'Give ear' is expressed by the homophonic choral writing, and the underlying tension by the bi-tonality. The next section, allegro moderato, is built on a concise ostinato figure (Ex. 65). The insistence of the exhortation 'Stir up thy strength' is emphasised by the divided male chorus and by the reiteration of a single note in the principal vocal motive; its intensity by the bi-tonal contradictions of the melodic lines (Ex. 66), and the low-pitched chromatic counterpoint of the wood-wind.

The central episode of this first movement is the refrain, set to a chorale-like theme in Bb major, in the soprano line. The tonal unity is disturbed by the tenors, who announce the theme in canon, in Gb major.

The ensuing fugue is also constructed on an ostinato bass. Like the preceding allegro moderato it is in C minor, with a characteristic substitution of Db for D \sharp . The subject enters over a dominant pedal G, the answer over its dominant (Ex. 67). In this way the root position of the tonic chord is withheld until the final entry of the subject in the orchestral bass. This harmonic procedure combines

with the regularly spaced entries of the subject to effect an accumulation of tension which is released in the massive homophonic climax.

The opening of the next section, 'Thou feedest them with the bread of tears', is another remarkable instance of Roussel's individual application of bi-tonality. In the bass of the orchestra there is an ornamental pedal F \sharp ; above this the trombones announce a short motive, GCG, suggesting a tonic C or G. After a repetition this motive is doubled at the sixth with EAE, confirming its tonal area, while the bass moves down to C \sharp , dominant of F \sharp . This new combination is also repeated. Then the motive is trebled, beginning on G, B \flat and Db; the bass rises to E \sharp , written enharmonically as F \sharp . Thus the two strongly opposing lines enter into a coherent tonal relationship forming a dominant seventh, with a flattened fifth, on G, in its last inversion. The dominant chord is affirmed over eight bars, and its dissonant content increased by a change of the bass to Ab, the minor ninth, before the resolution into a C major chord.

In the last section of the first movement Roussel illustrates the phrase 'and our enemies laugh' with

bi-modality (Ex. 68). Both upper and lower parts are related to the tonic E; but the former use the Lydian scale with D \sharp , the bass the Phrygian.

The transition in the text from anxious clamour to introspective recollection transforms the music. The solo tenor recitative 'Thou has brought a vine out of Egypt' is embroidered by a flowing counter-point on the solo violin, of unmistakable pictorial significance. The first phrase of the chorale emerges in the bass of the orchestra in Eb major; but this key is not established, and an harmonically complex paragraph leads to a resolution on to C major.

The following andantino is one of Roussel's finest inspirations. The tenor describes the flowering of the vine, symbolised in the choral accompaniment. On a wordless vocalisation the basses quietly introduce the choral theme in C major, and are joined by the contraltos. The progression of triads and chords of the seventh conveys a tranquil emotion. The music cadences on A major, and the emotion is intensified by the entry of the sopranos and by the oscillation between major and minor harmony. Another curving phrase leads to Gb major, and the texture is further enriched by the division of the women's voices

and the entry of the tenors. The soloist drops out, and the music sweeps up with powerful momentum to a ff climax on the dominant seventh on G \sharp . At this point, instead of the expected resolution on to C (the predominating tonality of the work), the chorale, diatonically harmonised, is proclaimed with jubilant strength in B major. This is the first time that this key has been heard, and its natural brilliance in the orchestra is enhanced by its contrast to the preceding flatter tonalities.

A relaxation is effected by the most classic of devices - a falling bass, moving through two octaves. The movement ends on a thirteenth on B, followed by a general pause.

Once again the mood of the text alters, this time to positive anger: 'Why hast thou then broken down her hedges, so that all they which pass by the way do pluck her?' This scherzo in A minor is in two sections, the first in triple time, the second in duple. In contrast to the previous movement the phrases are short and irregular, the rhythms violent and syncopated, the chords dissonant and the harmonic progressions dislocated by abrupt swerves of tonality.

The last movement is parallel in many respects to

the first one. The allegro moderato returns to the theme of the withered vine; the fugal entries are terse, and the harmony pungent. The following moderato imposes a more tranquil atmosphere, and leads into a second fugue, in Bb minor. The fugue subject is derived from the earlier one (Ex. 69), and the structures of the two fugues are identical. But the orchestral accompaniment and the counter-material are varied. The music broadens to a fff climax on a minor seventh chord on Eb. On this chord the chorus reiterate the phrase 'and we will call upon thy name'. A three-note bass figure emphasises the note Gb. This figure is compressed, the first two notes are altered, and the Gb becomes by enharmonic equivalence F#. The last sustained F# assumes the quality of a dominant, and prepares for the B major of the concluding chorale. Supported only by the pizzicato of 'cellos and basses, the chorus make their final whispered supplication 'Turn us again, O Lord God of Hosts, and we shall be saved'.

The vocal writing in Psalm 80 shows an appreciation of practical considerations. There is a predominance of conjunct movement in the individual parts, and awkward entries are prepared in the accompaniment.

The principal difficulty in performance is the high tessitura of the first sopranos in the slow movement; only singers of exceptional ability can maintain the necessary ease, roundness and volume of tone on this line, which rarely descends below *a'*, and frequently rises to *a''* and *b''*.

In general, the prosody is of a high standard. Mr. Demuth has drawn attention to a miscalculation (1) in the tenor recitative. In the phrase 'and did'st cause it to take deep root', the word 'take' is emphasised by a prolonged high note at the expense of the more important 'deep root'. Another example of uncomfortable prosody occurs in the scherzo. In the triple-time section Roussel gives a natural accentuation to the clause: 'so that all they which pass by the way do pluck her'. In the duple-time setting the accentuation is forced: 'so that all they which pass by the way do pluck her'. Elsewhere the composer's appreciation of the English prose rhythms is evident.

The orchestra is handled with skill and imagination. The rôle is not to strengthen the vocal lines, which are rarely doubled, but to make an independent and characteristically instrumental contribution to the

(1) Norman Demuth: op. cit., p. 104.

composite texture. In the tuttis Roussel applies his colour in broad sweeps, while in the more restrained passages he uses individual tone-colours to bring out the emotional implications of the text. For example, the phrase 'Thou feedest them with the bread of tears' is set against a sombre orchestral background of 'cellos, basses, low wood-wind and brass. The tenor recitative, with its message of hope, is accompanied by solo violin, muted strings, flute, bassoon and horns.

Psalm 80, one of the composer's most compelling works, is also one of his most original conceptions. The broad choral effects, the strong contrasts, and the full climaxes achieved by simple means, establish an affinity with Handel; but Roussel's setting is completely contemporary in spirit. At the same time it stands apart from other twentieth-century works of Biblical inspiration, despite some points of superficial similarity with certain of them. Honegger's King David is based largely on the Book of Psalms, culminates in a chorale, and contains a wide variety of technical procedures. Stravinsky makes considerable use of ostinati in the Symphony of Psalms, and he, too, adopts a simple vocal style. In Flos Campi

Vaughan Williams writes for a divisi wordless chorus; and Walton, in Belshazzar's Feast, uses the orchestra to underline the dramatic content. Yet Psalm 80 has not the barbaric opulence of Belshazzar or King David. Its feeling is not comparable to the exotic sensuousness of Flos Campi, nor to the mystic intensity of the Symphony of Psalms. The key to the significance of the work lies in the composer's own personality. Roussel was, in the best meaning of this much-abused term, a humanist: a passionate belief in the essential grandeur of mankind and in the persistence of spiritual values unrelated to dogmatic religion formed the core of his philosophy. In this psalm he saw not only the misery, but also the indestructible dignity of a suffering people. This dignity he conveys by the virile strength underlying the music, and his setting is an assertion of faith in the indomitable spirit of humanity. The composer's vision, his sincerity of purpose, and the consummate mastery with which he realises his intentions, justify Prunières' claim that Psalm 80 is among the masterpieces of French music. ⁽¹⁾

(1) La Revue Musicale: April, 1929, p. 51.

2. The Songs.

Among the imported and more or less well assimilated musical forms which provide the basis for much late nineteenth-century French music, two indigenous genres stand out: the operetta and the song with piano accompaniment. By self-definition the operetta explored a limited field of emotion, although within its limits it was capable of considerable diversity. But French song, or, to use the word which has acquired the status of a generic appellation, mélodie, offered to the composer a medium where he could investigate and give expression to an extended and varied range of experience. It is only in comparatively recent times that critics outside France have devoted a great deal of attention to this important genre. In his excellent study of Fauré, Mr. Norman Suckling has illuminated the background to the mélodie and analysed its distinctive aesthetic characteristics. (1) More recently the Dutch musicologist Frits Noske, in a scholarly and imaginative work, has finally disposed of the convenient but erroneous theory that the mélodie is an inferior derivation of the German Lied. (2)

(1) Norman Suckling: Fauré. London, 1946.

(2) Frits Noske: La Mélodie française de Berlioz à Duparc. Paris and Amsterdam, 1954.

The refinement and subtlety of the mélodie did not appeal to every composer. D'Indy ignored the genre almost completely, and a consideration of his temperament, musical outlook, and the few examples he did produce, suggests that his abstinence was well-advised. And as the curriculum at the Schola reflected accurately its director's pre-occupations, little or no instruction in this branch of art was given to the first pupils. It is not without significance, therefore, that Roussel should have essayed the genre as early as 1903, after the composition of the Piano Trio and before Résurrection, two works overpoweringly influenced by d'Indy. The four songs of Op. 3 and the companion set Op. 8, written in 1907, have provoked contradictory reactions among the composer's biographers. Mr. Demuth considers the songs to be inferior to the other early works:

'It is a curious thing that although Roussel showed such enterprise in his early works, the substance of the early songs is definitely conventional. If we think of Rustiques, for example, even though they do not take us very far, at least the idiom is one unique to Roussel, and what influences there are may be found more in the form than in the texture. The songs, however, might have been written by any composer of the period'.(1)

(1) Norman Demuth: op. cit., p.107.

R. Bernard takes the opposite view:

'In no field did Roussel find himself so quickly and so completely as in that of the mélodie. It is astonishing that the Quatre Poèmes of Henri de Régnier constitute Op. 3 and date from 1903. It seems impossible that Le Jardin mouillé, Le Départ, Voeu and Madrigal Lyrique antedate Rustiques and are contemporaneous with Résurrection'. (1)

This extreme difference of opinion may be in part explained by the disparity between the promise and the performance in these songs. It is true that they are individual in idiom, and they lay a sure foundation for the composer's later work in the medium. But their artistic value is not commensurate with their originality; for this Roussel's choice of text is chiefly responsible.

The enormous vogue enjoyed by Henri de Régnier at the beginning of this century is one of those literary success stories which, however explicable in their context, never fail to astonish later generations, who marvel at the poor taste of their ancestors. Mr. Suckling has pointed out, in connection with the German Lied, that the excessive employment of words directly describing emotions devaluates their currency. The parallel danger to

(1) R. Bernard: op.cit., p.116.

which the French poet is exposed is that a stylised and symbolic language may also lose its meaning and likewise cease to communicate any real personal experience. Henri de Régnier is a case in point. His use of Parnassian and Symbolist imagery is, in the great bulk of his work, a purely literary device, expressive of nothing at all. In the poems selected by Roussel, the Symbolist barrel is scraped to the bottom; the sea, the dawn, night, roses, fountains, rain-drenched gardens - all the well-worn images are there, their remaining evocative potential dissipated by indiscriminate adjectival qualification. As a sample, the following lines from Voeu (op. 3, no. 2) are typical:

'Je voudrais
Que tu entendes
Forte, vaste, profonde et tendre,
La grande voix sourde de la mer
Qui se lamente
Comme l'Amour;'

The pretentious banality of such texts is completely out of harmony with Roussel's fastidious sensibility, and the composer is unable or unwilling to apply to them the full-blooded rhetorical treatment which alone might justify their musical setting. The contrast between the lack of restraint in the

text and the reserve of the music in most of these early songs is striking. And it is with those poems which are the least pretentious, such as Le Jardin mouillé (op. 3, no. 3), that Roussel is most successful.

A discussion of Le Départ (op. 3, no. 1) will serve to illustrate Roussel's attitude to his text, and the special features of his idiom at this stage in his career. It might be expected that the young composer, in the absence of official guidance at the Schola, would model himself on one of the great contemporary masters of the mélodie. But his style is equally far removed from the fluid melodic and harmonic writing of Fauré, the highly emotional and dramatic language of Duparc, and the intricate speech rhythms and inflections of Debussy. Le Départ is 'through-composed', and the melodic phrases are not repeated. A ternary structure is, however, imposed by the contrasting tonality of the second verse and by the return of the home key and the opening accompanimental figure at the beginning of the third. The vocal line is restrained and unadorned. The asymmetrical curves, the close intervals, the repeated notes and the even flow of the

rhythm impart something of the character of a stylised chant, and the almost total absence of appoggiaturas and auxiliary notes implies an emotional objectivity which belies the bravado and sentimentality of the poem. This austerity leads occasionally to rigidity; in Ex. 70, the identity of the rhythmic pattern in the second and fourth bars of the vocal line induces monotony and impedes the flow. Later Roussel learned how to make his line more flexible without changing its essential character.

The accompaniment is of a type used by Roussel in the majority of his songs. A short motive is announced in the first bar, and is maintained with minor variations throughout the song. In his harmony the composer applies appoggiaturas and altered notes to increase the dissonance content of his basically diatonic chords (Ex. 71).

Of the other Régnier songs, Le Jardin mouillé, already mentioned, is remarkable for its delicate and evocative accompaniment, and its mood of discreet intimacy. The spare keyboard writing in Invocation (op. 8, no. 3) recalls late Faure; but the flavour of the slightly angular melody and the

harmony is peculiar to Roussel (Ex. 72). The remaining songs in these two groups are of little interest.

La Menace (op. 9, 1907), also on a poem by Régnier, and the first setting of G. Jean-Aubry, Flammes, (op. 10, 1908), come into the same general category, and have the same weaknesses as the earlier songs. The second of the Jean-Aubry settings, Light (op. 19, no. 1, 1918), is more coherent than its predecessor; but the conventional verse has not evoked a profound response from the composer, and the song lacks interest.

The two Poèmes Chinois (op. 12, 1907-8) mark a new departure in Roussel's evolution as a song writer. The spirit of these poems has survived translation and re-translation - the French text by H.P. Roché is based on the English version of Herbert Giles. Finely-drawn miniatures, they have those qualities of clarity, economy, subtlety of suggestion and restraint of emotional expression so conspicuously absent from the Régnier poems. Roussel responded to this aesthetic, and set them to music which preserves their individual character. In both songs an undogmatic application of the

pentatonic scale in the melody and harmony evokes their exotic background. The formal simplicity of the Ode à un jeune gentilhomme inspires Roussel's first strophic setting. The alteration of the central phrase of the melodic line and the elaboration of the accompaniment in the second and third verses provide adequate variety. Amoureux séparés is a more elaborately constructed song, in accordance with the poetic form, and the piano plays a vital rôle in effecting the dramatic transitions implied in the text. Slight though these songs are, they still retain their freshness and charm half a century later.

Roussel returned on two occasions to this collection of poems. In these later settings the greater richness of his technique expresses a more penetrating psychological insight. In the first of the Op. 35 songs, Des fleurs font une broderie (1927), the successive moods of youthful exuberance, tenderness and anxious uncertainty are delineated in the varied treatment of the accompaniment. The companion piece, Réponse d'une épouse sage, is outstanding. This eighth century poem, with its synthesis of restraint and concentration, emotional

complexity and clarity of form, is the natural product and expression of a mature civilisation, in which custom and ceremony are stimulating and fruitful influences. Roussel translates the poem's qualities into musical terms with superb assurance; each phase of this interior drama is illumined by the musical setting. Bernard's assertion that a whole volume would be necessary to analyse every aspect of this song may be an exaggeration. But it is certain that a substantial chapter could be devoted to these four pages of music, which constitute (to borrow Mr. Suckling's felicitous phrase) a 'serene resolution of feeling into form'.

The unerring certainty of the total effect is the consequence of a harmonious interplay of different technical elements; the augmented and diminished intervals of the altered scales, more expressive than the whole tones of the pentatonic series; the timing and direction of the modulations; the subtle alterations in the character of the vocal line; the precisely indicated dynamic differentiation; the changing material of the accompaniment; and the variation in phrase lengths. At a first glance apparently simple, this song presents an exacting challenge not

only to the musicality, but also to the human understanding of its interpreter.

The two songs of Op. 47, Favorite abandonnée and Vois, de belles filles (1932), are shorter and less complex. In the second, the opening ritornello establishes the atmosphere as surely as does that of its otherwise very different prototype, Fauré's Clair de Lune.

In the six Odes Anacréontiques (Op. 31 and op. 32, 1926) Roussel turned to an even more stylised poetic tradition. These highly polished verses (translated by Leconte de Lisle), with their precise literary allusions and elaborate imagery, are unsuited to transposition into the evocative language of music, and Roussel's settings are a remarkable tour de force. In Op. 31, no. 3 and Op. 32, no. 2 - both entitled Sur une jeune fille, he achieves the calm beauty and crystallised emotion of Attic sculpture through the clear yet flexible outline of the melody, the slow unfolding of the ostinati patterns in the accompaniment and the firm, but not harsh, dissonances of the harmony. The two odes in praise of Bacchus, Op. 31, no. 2, Qu'il faut boire, and Op. 32, no. 1, Sur lui-même, despite their dis-

similarity of treatment, have both the same gaiety, tinged with self-mockery. A more pronounced irony underlies Op.31, no.1, Sur lui-même, which is based on the most familiar of amorous conceits, the military metaphor. The concluding song of the set, Op.32, no.3, Sur un songe, attains a simple but effective equilibrium around the central dramatic point.

The Deux Idylles (op.44, 1931), are also settings of translations by Leconte de Lisle, this time of poems by Theocritus and Moskhos, and they display the same clarity of outline and economy of texture as the earlier odes.

The formalisation of emotion in the Greek songs, and the absence of sensuous treatment of melody, harmony and texture, makes their appeal an esoteric one. But for the listener capable of understanding and appreciating their cool beauty and noble purity, they rank high among Roussel's songs.

Much more immediately accessible are the four settings of poems by René Chalupt. In the latter Roussel discovered a contemporary poet whose sensibility in many important respects matched his own. Chalupt remains a minor poet; but within his circum-

scribed area he discloses a markedly individual approach to his art. In each of the poems selected by Roussel, Chalupe adopts accepted poetic conventions and familiar imagery, and throws a new and usually ironical light on them. In Le Bachelier de Salamanque (op. 20, no. 1, 1919) the idealised 'donneurs de sérénades' of Symbolist fantasy are materialised into a furtive and ludicrous bourgeois timorously breaking the law in Salamanca. The mockery of the text is interpreted by the alternations of rapid declamation and exaggerated prolongations in the vocal line; while the accompaniment provides one of the wittiest of the innumerable French keyboard imitations of the guitar.

The second song in Op. 20, Sarabande (1919) is free from ironical overtones. In this case the 'fête champêtre' idiom is applied in a personal and sensuous content, thus acquiring a new dimension:

'Et c'est pour toi que les jets d'eau
Dansent de sveltes sarabandes....'

This discreetly voluptuous text provides the inspiration for one of Roussel's most beautiful songs. Poem, melody, harmony, form and texture are indissolubly integrated and communicate an emotion

whose depth and intensity are not disguised by the restraint of its utterance. Every aspect of the setting merits close attention. The manner in which the serene opening phrase is expanded and reshaped on its return in the major mode bears in itself the unmistakable imprint of genius. The harmony is poised, defining the tonal centre while avoiding the committal of a root position of the tonic chord before the conclusion. The figuration and texture of the piano part show an imaginative use of ordinary resources.

More subtle in its irony than Le Bachelier de Salamanque is L'Heure du Retour (op. 50, no. 1, 1934). In the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries the sea was the prime symbol of physical, intellectual and spiritual adventure. In this poem Chalupt applies the metaphor in reverse to an ageing roué, and mockingly urges him to return to the unadventurous security of domestic comforts:

'Voyageur, voyageur, ne vois-tu
qu'il est l'heure
De rebrousser chemin et de rentrer
chez toi?
Ne vois-tu qu'il est l'heure?'

This refrain is set by Roussel to a suave barcarolle in the purest tradition of salon sea-

music. The avoidance of obvious parody makes the satire all the more deadly.

The last of the Chalupt songs, Coeur en péril (op. 50, no. 2), with its brio and rueful self-mockery, is one of the composer's simplest and most immediately attractive settings.

Although Jazz dans la nuit (op. 38), composed in 1928 to a text by René Dommange, is quite unlike any other song by Roussel in its technique, it has the ironic detachment of some of the Chalupt settings, and, like them, presents a familiar theme in a novel context. In this song the conventions of the 'bal masqué' are transposed into the twentieth-century world of garish lights, tangos and saxophones. The particular technical problem posed, namely, the absorption of the highly stylised idiom of jazz into the composer's personal language, is brilliantly solved. Although the origins of the languid rhythms and sliding chromaticisms are unmistakable, the composer's personality is stamped on all his material. Far from being pastiche or parody, Jazz dans la nuit is an individual and sardonic, although not unsympathetic, comment on its subject.

The two songs of Op. 55, written in 1935 to

poems by Georges Ville, are also ironical in tone. Vieilles cartes, vieilles mains has libidinous implications, while Si quelquefois tu pleures... has an undercurrent of bitterness expressed in the chromatic harmonies of the accompaniment.

Neither of the settings of poems in English is among the composer's best songs. A Farewell (op. 19, no. 2, 1918) is handicapped by its insipid text. The subtle fragrance of Joyce's poetry has eluded Roussel in his setting of A Flower given to my daughter (op. 44, 1931).

The two Vocalises (without opus number) date from 1927 and 1928, when this type of composition was generally popular. Each is designed to illustrate a particular point of vocal technique: Vocalise No. 1 is a test of intonation, and No. 2 of legato phrasing and control of nuance. Both are musically conceived, and the second one is familiar in various instrumental arrangements.

Rossignol, mon mignon, the first of the Deux Poèmes de Ronsard (op. 26) for voice and flute (without piano) was composed for the Tombeau de Ronsard published by the Revue Musicale in May, 1924, to mark the fourth centenary of the poet's birth. The dia-

logue is conducted with graceful elegance and precision. The second Ronsard setting, Ciel, aer et vens, translates the quiet emotion of the poem into a gently flowing pastoral rhythm and supple melodic lines.

O bon vin, où as-tu crû? (without opus number, 1928) is a lively arrangement of a folk-song from Champagne, with a macaronic and bucolic text.

CHAPTER XI

Conclusion

Any attempt to 'place' a composer must begin with a consideration of his relationship to his immediate predecessors, contemporaries and successors. The various direct influences acting on Roussel have been discussed in the course of the preceding chapters, and may be summarized here. The personality of d'Indy dominates the early period; but this influence becomes more and more attenuated in the later compositions, and the last work to be strongly indebted to d'Indy's conceptions is the Second Symphony. Debussy's music was more important as a liberating force than as a model for imitation. It provided that opposite pole of attraction which enabled Roussel to escape from the restricted orbit of the Schola. The influence of Ravel and Satie, if indeed such an influence exists, would be impossible to define with any certainty. What is beyond doubt is the fact that, had these two composers remained unknown to Roussel, his development would not in any major aspect have been different. Stravinsky's example may have hastened Roussel's progress along his own chosen path. Nevertheless, despite certain points of apparent similarity (the

most obvious - and the most misleading - being their rhythmic vitality) the two composers remain worlds apart in their intention and achievement. The prevailing character of post-1918 musical thought in France may have helped Roussel to crystallise his final style. But no one composer, or group of composers, of the post-war generation, had any specific influence on him.

The practical interest in folk-song shown by so many of d'Indy's adherents was not shared by Roussel, and French folk-music played no part in the formation of his idiom. Nor did the popular music of his day affect his style in any profound way, despite occasional traces of the café-concert or jazz techniques. Hindu music, on the other hand, acted as a stimulating influence at a crucial stage of his evolution. However, Roussel recognised its limitations as an element of a European idiom, and did not attempt to make any dogmatic application of its special characteristics.

So the source of the composer's style cannot be simply defined. Like other great artists, he took what he needed from wherever it was to be found, and assimilated these borrowings into his own per-

sonal style. His independence is emphasised by the fact that he founded no school, and did not establish a new tradition. His younger contemporaries in France were unanimous in their respect and admiration for the composer and his music. The memorial issue of the Revue Musicale, and Bernard's study, contain tributes from such musicians as Auric, Caplet, Delvincourt, Durey, Ferroud, Ibert, Milhaud, Poulenc and Thiriet. Poulenc, surprisingly, named Roussel as one of the three composers who had influenced him most strongly. (Perhaps equally surprising, in view of their common interest in oriental music, is the omission of Roussel's name from the lengthy and heterogeneous list of artists to whom Messiaen believes himself to be indebted.) But none of these composers attempted to adopt or develop Roussel's musical language. Nor would such an attempt have borne fruit. Unlike that of Stravinsky, Schoenberg or Hindemith, Roussel's technique is not in any essential respect a revolutionary one. It is firmly rooted in eighteenth and nineteenth-century concepts of form, harmony, tonality and rhythm. The individual distinction of his music derives from a

personal manipulation of these elements. Whenever the medium or the form is unsuited to the harmonic and textural complexity of his thought, he tends to relapse into a neutral diatonic idiom (as, for example, in the organ fughetta ~~en~~ Le Testament). As far as other composers are concerned, therefore, the path that he followed, however promising it may appear at first glance, leads to a dead end. (This, of course, does not in any way affect the validity of Roussel's own use of the idiom.)

This isolation of Roussel is often referred to as something exceptional in the context of twentieth-century French music. But genius is as isolated in France as anywhere, and at no time has this been more true than during the last fifty years. This fact has been obscured by the schools which sprang up around some of the most prominent figures; but Debussy's well-known and bitter comment on the 'Debussistes' is indicative of the gulf separating the original artist from those who ape his mannerisms. He and Ravel, often bracketed together, are as different one from another as are Chopin and Liszt. D'Indy's methods, so ardently propagated, produced no composer of his stature. The artistic unity of

'Les Six' was a figment of the fertile imagination of their self-appointed publicist, Jean Cocteau; the principal figures, Honegger, Milhaud and Poulenc, could hardly be more distinct in their aims and methods. Nor do the post-1945 composers, with their varied allegiances, offer grounds for belief in the future emergence of a national style. There has, in fact, been no major organic tradition in French music since the eighteenth century comparable to those of Germany and Austria. Roussel's isolation from his contemporaries is not exceptional, it is inevitable.

Although the composer cannot be placed, for the reasons stated above, in what for want of a better term might be called a 'local' tradition, that is to say a handing-down and a development of techniques of expression in one particular medium within a limited historical period, nevertheless his art is in a definite sense specifically French. Debussy, in a famous phrase, remarked that 'le génie français, c'est quelque chose comme la fantaisie dans la sensibilité'. He did not further clarify his meaning, and the definition invites a more precise evaluation. If by sensibility is understood sensitive acuity of

apprehension, and if fantasy is conceived as the artistic imaginative faculty, then much French art is indeed characterised by a specially direct relationship between these two attributes. French artists of all epochs and tendencies have been concerned with the transmutation of finely differentiated shades of perception - whether of a rational, emotional or sensuous order - into artistic terms of universal validity, by the agency of a highly-charged imaginative faculty. It is this which distinguishes their creations from those of artists whose perception is more generalised (although not necessarily less intense), and whose artistic imagination operates without the stimulus of an immediate experience. This attitude is the link binding such otherwise unrelated composers as Couperin, Berlioz and Debussy; at the same time it separates them from their Teutonic contemporaries.

Roussel belongs to the same succession. He was endowed with an acutely sensitive apprehension, and his powerful musical imagination transmuted the material of his perception into artistic expression. Consequently, much of his production is directly related to some particular stimulus which provided

the initial inspiration. The starting-point may be a place or scene (Poème de la Forêt, Rustiques, Prelude to Padmâvatî, Prelude from Le Quatorze Juillet); a particular culture or national spirit (the Chinese, Greek and Ronsard songs, Psalm 80, Le Bardit des Francs); a story or a dance sequence (the ballets, the incidental music, Padmâvatî); a fictional or mythical personality (Joueurs de Flûte). It may even be another musical style, as in Segovia and Jazz dans la Nuit.

His oeuvre includes another group of works which fulfil his desire to write music divorced from any specific association. Into this category come many of the later compositions (among them the last two symphonies, the Sinfonietta, the String Quartet and String Trio, the Piano Concerto and the 'Cello Concertino), as well as some of the earlier ones (the Piano Trio, the first Violin Sonata and the Piano Sonatino, for example).

If these two categories are compared, it will be seen that they call for different abilities. In the first group the capacity to translate the subject into a concise and striking musical idea is more important than a talent for abstract musical organis-

ation and development. In the smaller compositions the simplest formal structures suffice. In the larger works the structural framework is provided by the scenario or the text. The composer may give additional coherence to the work by his application of tonality (as Roussel does in Bacchus et Ariane and Psalm 80, for instance): but neither unity nor sustained development is necessary or even desirable.

In the second group, on the other hand, the essential unity must come from the organisation of the musical material itself. If the ideas are too diverse or too self-contained; if their elaboration is artificial and not organic; then, however outstanding the quality of the ideas in themselves, the resulting work will be unsatisfactory as a whole.

Roussel's peculiar gifts predisposed him to success in the first category. His musical evocations are unsurpassed by any of his contemporaries in their range and appositeness. But the same gifts handicapped him in his approach to the second group. There is no reason to doubt his statement that 'the study of form has preoccupied me constantly'. Yet it is his treatment of formal problems, especially

in the larger 'abstract' works, which is the least satisfactory aspect of his technique. Some of the responsibility for this deficiency must be attributed to his early training. D'Indy's teaching on form, in particular on the more complex symphonic forms, was based on generalisations drawn from his study of Beethoven and Franck. He regarded these formal patterns as moulds determined once and for all by the earlier masters, and efficacious regardless of the type of material poured into them. In his teaching on sonata-form, for instance, he stressed the tripartite division of exposition, development and recapitulation, and the division of the exposition itself into two principal and contrasting ideas, one 'masculine' and the other 'feminine'. (Unfortunately he was not interested in Haydn, who would have provided an antidote to this excessive standardisation.)

Roussel's allegiance to d'Indy's formal conceptions in the formative period is understandable; his deviations are rare, and comparatively unimportant. Later, when he outgrew d'Indy, he abandoned inflated developments and cyclic forms. But there is no evidence to suggest a fundamental change of

attitude towards musical structure. His programme of schematisation tended to accentuate the contrasts and divisions within single movements, and sometimes his forms appear to be imposed on his material instead of growing out of it. In the simpler episodic forms, such as the ternary form of the slow movements and some of the scherzi, this is not a drawback (although on rare occasions, as in the Pastorale from the Petite Suite, and in the last of the Trois Pièces, there is a disturbing lack of consistency of style in the two sections). It is in the more elaborate forms, implying a much greater degree of integration, that the potential danger of Roussel's method is most apparent. In his sonata and sonata-rondo forms the principal ideas are usually strongly contrasted and self-contained, with the consequence that the music falls apart into its component divisions, however carefully the transitions are managed and however varied the detail of the formal pattern.

Generally speaking, therefore, Roussel's most flawless compositions are those of the first category - the songs, the ballets, the short descriptive pieces, and the choral works; while the finest

parts of the other works are the simpler movements.

There is no other twentieth-century composer whose position is directly comparable to that of Roussel. But it is unusual for an artist's situation to be entirely without parallel amongst his contemporaries, and very often a temperamental affinity and a similarity of interpretation link the production of individuals working in different mediums. So, for example, Berlioz has more in common with Delacroix than with any contemporary composer; and much of Debussy's music has as its nearest equivalent the painting of Monet or the poetry of Mallarmé. And so, too, in order to find an artist whose sensibility and technique are akin to those of Roussel, we must leave the art of music and turn to that of literature.

The name of Joseph Conrad has been invoked by critics of the composer, chiefly on account of the coincidence of their early history. Yet a comparison of the two men is justified on stronger grounds than their maritime experience. Indeed, Roussel himself has invited it. When asked to express his own view of art, the composer quoted

extensively from the preface to The Nigger of the Narcissus, and added:

'I do not think it possible to define with greater poetry and feeling the aim and essence of art, whether this art be expressed through words, colours or sounds.' (1)

Such a complete identity of conception and purpose between two artists cannot but lead to some similarities of method and achievement.

It is, however, possible to exaggerate the correspondences between the personalities and careers of Roussel and Conrad. Both were psychologically complex; but the Frenchman had a greater stability of temperament than the exiled Pole. And the curves of their respective artistic progress are different, even opposed. Roussel matured slowly, and reached the peak of his activity in the years immediately preceding his untimely death. Conrad, on the other hand, produced his finest work near the beginning of his career as a writer, and showed a marked decline in creative power in the later novels. Thus the most illuminating comparison will be one which ignores chronology and sets Conrad's early masterpieces against the best

(1) Le Monde Musical: 30th June, 1926. Les Vues de quelques compositeurs sur la musique contemporaine.

music of Roussel's maturity. One of the best-known of Conrad's works from this period is Lord Jim; and since in many respects it epitomises the author's strength and limitations, it may serve to illustrate his technique.

In the clarity of his observation, and in his ability to communicate his sensations in artistic terms, Conrad is the equal of Roussel. He affirmed, in the preface referred to by the composer, that:

'My task, which I am trying to achieve, is....before all, to make you see!'

And from the opening portrait of the central character to the closing scene, Lord Jim is rich in evocations of people and of places, presented with subtlety and precision, and carrying the force of a direct visual experience.

The author, in order to give depth to his presentation of character, employs here, as elsewhere, the device of a narrator, Marlow. So the chief protagonist is observed at one remove, through the eyes and the reactions of a sympathetic but sceptical spectator, and sometimes at two removes, when Marlow is himself relating the opinions of others. This technique enables the author to view

his character simultaneously from several angles. The resulting double focus, with its ambivalence and its ironical implications, is similar in type to the effect achieved by Roussel in such works as Le Festin de l'Araignée and the Chalupt songs.

Lord Jim is generally, although not universally, considered to be one of the best-constructed of Conrad's longer works. The exposition of the novel is excellently designed; Conrad's violations of chronology enable him to delay the emergence of the central fact - Jim's jump from the sinking ship - for one hundred pages. But the latter part of the book has not the same coherence. Episodes are introduced with little or no relevance to the central theme, and some material from the exposition remains unexplained.

In this respect, too, Conrad resembles Roussel. Despite certain exceptional formal achievements he was essentially an episodic writer, and his attempts to expand his basic ideas or to integrate strongly-contrasting material are generally less than completely successful.

Finally, the parallelism between the methods of the authors is most apparent when Conrad's literary

prose is compared with Roussel's musical language. The following extract is the conclusion of Chapter II of Lord Jim, describing the voyage of the Patna, laden with pilgrims, across the Indian Ocean.

'Every morning the sun, as if keeping pace in his revolutions with the progress of the pilgrimage, emerged with a silent burst of light exactly at the same distance astern of the ship, caught up with her at noon, pouring the concentrated fire of his rays on the pious purposes of the men, glided past on his descent, and sank mysteriously into the sea evening after evening, preserving the same distance ahead of her advancing bows. The five whites on board lived amidships, isolated from the human cargo. The awnings covered the deck with a white roof from stem to stern, and a faint hum, a low murmur of sad voices, alone revealed the presence of a crowd of people upon the great blaze of the ocean. Such were the days, still, hot, heavy, disappearing one by one into the past, as if falling into an abyss for ever open in the wake of the ship; and the ship, lonely under a wisp of smoke, held on her steadfast way black and smouldering in a luminous immensity, as if scorched by a flame flicked at her from a heaven without pity.

'The nights descended on her like a benediction.'

Here is the literary equivalent of Roussel's contrapuntal and polytonal technique. This long and complicated paragraph is constructed around the main theme of the ship's lonely and monotonous progress, interwoven with the subordinate themes

of the relentless heat and light of the sun on the ocean, the multitude of coloured pilgrims, and the handful of white officers. The tension created by these contrasts is resolved in the harmony of the final sentence.

After his death, in 1924, Conrad's fame was overshadowed by the customary reaction for two decades. But since 1945 he has been the object of increasing critical attention, and as a result his high reputation is largely restored on a more secure foundation.

Twenty years have now elapsed since Roussel died, and there have been signs of a revival of interest in his music. But it is unlikely that his popularity will ever match that of the writer; partly on account of the lower average standard of critical writing on music, and the comparative inaccessibility to the public of such a large proportion of his output; but also because the music itself makes so few concessions to a superficial approach - it will not appeal to those who look for a quick return on a small investment.

However, Roussel, who was indifferent to popular applause during his lifetime, did not seek it

posthumously. His ambition - a simple one - was simply stated, in the words already quoted:

'My sole aim has been to serve my art, by giving clear expression to my thoughts. I hope that I have succeeded in this, for that is the only reward I desire'.

Those who know his music believe that he achieved this aim.

Appendix A

Roussel's Compositions

Detailed information relating to Roussel's compositions is supplied chiefly by Vuillemin, Hoérée and the Catalogue. Later writers, for example Bernard and Demuth (and Mellers, in Grove's Dictionary, 5th Edition) have derived their information from one or other of these sources. None of these authorities is, however, entirely accurate. This appendix, therefore, is intended to provide as accurate a list as possible of Roussel's compositions, their dates, dedications, first performances, arrangements and publishers.

Where the MS. dates are available (i.e. where the autograph MS. is in the library of the Conservatoire and is dated) they are quoted (a single date marks the date of completion). Where no MS. dates are available the authorities have been compared. If their information agrees, it is accepted: where there is discrepancy, this is noted.

Detailed information about the first public performances is given in each case: where a previous private performance has been recorded, this is mentioned. All first performances took place

in Paris, unless otherwise stated.

All the principal arrangements have been included; versions of extracts from the operas and ballets for various instrumental combinations have been omitted. These may be found in the Catalogue.

The following abbreviations are used:

B. Bernard: op. cit.

Cat. Catalogue.

G. Grove, 5th Edition: article on Albert Roussel.

H. Hoérée: op. cit.

V. Vuillemin: op. cit.

D. Durand et Cie.

R.L. Rouart Lerolle et Cie.

Op.1. Des heures passent. Suite
for Piano.

1. Graves, légères...
2. Joyeuses...
3. Tragiques...
4. Champêtres...

Date of composition: 1898.

Dedications:

1. Mme. Ricour de Bourgies.
2. Mme. E. Henry-Baudot.
3. Mlle. Léontine Wattel.
4. Mlle. J. Taravent.

First performance: none noted by any
authority.

Publisher: Hamelle.

Op.2. Trio for Piano, Violin and
Violoncello.

Modéré sans lenteur.
Lent.
Finale.

Date of composition: May-October 1902(MS.)
Revised by Roussel for 2nd Edition, 1927.

Dedication: Armand Parent.

First performance (privately, 14th April,
1904, at the home of Mme. Taravent):
4th February, 1905: Société Nationale,
Salle Pleyel.
M. Dron (piano).
A. Parent (violin).
L. Fournier (violoncello).
(Cat., p.17, gives date as 4th April, 1905.
February date given by V. and H.)

Publisher: R.L.

Op.3. Quatre Poèmes (Henri de Régnier),
for voice and piano.

1. Le Départ.
2. Voeu.
3. Le Jardin Mouillé.
4. Madrigal lyrique.

Date of composition: September-October,
1903. (MS.)

Dedications:

1. Mme. Jeanne Raunay.
2. Mlle. Mary Garden.
3. Maurice Bagès.
4. Mme. Albert Groz.

First performance: 21st April, 1906:
Société Nationale, Salle Pleyel.
Jane Bathori (soprano).
Alfred Cortot (piano).

Publisher: R.L.

Op. 4. Résurrection. Symphonic prelude.

Date of composition: 17th August, 1903. (MS.)

Dedication: Edouard Brunel.

First performance: 17th May: Société
Nationale, Nouveau Théâtre.
Alfred Cortot (conductor).

Publisher: R.L.

(Although the Catalogue lists an orchestral
score as published, as well as a piano
reduction, no evidence for the existence
of such a score can be found.)

Op. 5. Rustiques. Suite for Piano.

1. Danse au bord de l'eau.
2. Promenade sentimentale en forêt.
3. Retour de fête.

Date of composition:

1 and 2: 1904. 3: 1906.

Dedication: Mme. Sérieyx Taravent.

First performance: 17th February, 1906:
Société Nationale, Salle Pleyel.
Mlle. Blanche Selva.

Publisher: D.

Op. 6. Divertissement for Flute, Oboe,
Clarinet, Bassoon, Horn and Piano.

Date of composition: 1906.

Dedication: Société moderne des instruments
à vent.

First performance: 10th April, 1906:
Salle des Agriculteurs. Société moderne
des instruments à vent.

Publisher: R.L.

Op. 7. Le Poème de la Forêt (First Symphony).

1. Forêt d'hiver.
2. Renouveau.
3. Soir d'été.
4. Faunes et Dryades.

Date of composition:

1. 14th June, 1906. (MS.)
2. 15th July, 1905. (MS.)
3. 20th October, 1904. (MS.)
4. 27th September, 1906. (MS.)

Dedication: Alfred Cortot.

First performances:

3. 15th December, 1904: Concerts Cortot.
4. 10th November, 1907: Concerts Lamoureux;
(Camille Chevillard, conductor).

(Other two movements were not performed separately.)

Complete work: 22nd March, 1908: Concerts Populaires. Théâtre de la Monnaie, Brussels (Silvain Dupuis, conductor).

Publisher: R.L. (Full score; pocket score, piano reduction for four hands by A.R.)

Op. 8. Quatre Poèmes (Henri de Régnier) for Voice and Piano.

1. Adieux.
2. Invocation.
3. Nuit d'Automne.
4. Odelette.

Date of composition: February-July, 1907.

Dedications:

1. Paul Poujaud.
2. Mme. Jane Bathori.
3. Emile Engel.
4. Mme. Octave Maus.

First performance: 11th January, 1908:
Société Nationale, Salle Erard.
Mme. Jane Bathori and Albert Roussel.

Publisher: R.L. (No. 1 also arranged with orchestral accompaniment by A.R.)

Op. 9. La Menace (Henri de Régnier), for
Voice, with Piano or Orchestral
accompaniment.

Date of composition: 2nd November, 1908. (MS.)

Dedication: Mme. Gustave Samazeuilh.

First performance: 11th March, 1911:
Concerts Hasselmans.

Emile Engel.

Louis Hasselmans (conductor).

Publisher: R.L.

Op. 10. Flammes (G. Jean-Aubry), for
Voice with Piano accompaniment.

Date of composition: 15th February, 1908.
(MS.)

Dedication: Mlle. Madeleine Aubry.

First performance: 14th February, 1909, at
Le Havre (see Cat., 17: no performers
mentioned).

Publisher: R.L.

Op. 11. Sonata No. 1, in D minor, for Violin
and Piano.

Lent - très animé.

Assez animé.

Très animé.

Date of composition: September, 1907 - July,
1908. Revised for 2nd Edition, 1931, by A.R.

Dedication: Vincent d'Indy.

First performance: 9th October, 1908: Salon
d'Automne.

Mlle. M. Dron (piano).

Armand Parent (violin).

Publisher: R.L.

Op. 12. Deux poèmes chinois (H.P. Roché,
after Giles), for Voice and Piano.

1. Ode à un jeune gentilhomme.
2. Amoureux séparés (Fu-Mi).

Dates of composition:

1. 9th March, 1907. (MS.)
2. 28th February, 1908. (MS.)

Dedications:

1. Mme. Alfred Cortot.
2. Mlle. Mary Piromnay.

First performances:

1. (Cat. 17) 28th June, 1907: Le Havre:
Cercle d'Art moderne (no performers
mentioned).
(V. 31) 11th January, 1908: Société
Nationale, Salle Erard: Jane Bathori and
A.R. (V. has possibly overlooked the
earlier provincial performance.)
2. (Cat. 17) 14th February, 1909: Le Havre.
(No performers mentioned.)

Publisher: R.L.

Op. 13. Le Marchand de Sable qui passe.
Incidental music to a 'conte lyrique'
in one act, by G. Jean-Aubry.

Date of composition: 23rd October, 1908. (MS.)

Dedication: Mlle. Suzanne Berchut (Mme.
Suzanne Balguérie).

First performance: 16th December, 1908: Le
Havre:

Albert Roussel (conductor).

(Cat. 17, 32, 68. V. 40.)

(Hoérée, 133, gives 16th December, 1909 -

apparently an error. Elsewhere he gives 16th December, 1908.)

Publisher: R.L.

Op. 14. Suite in F \sharp minor for Piano.

1. Prélude.
2. Sicilienne.
3. Bourrée.
4. Ronde.

(This is the order of the printed score and autograph MS. In Cat. 92, B. 114, and G., 2 and 3 are interchanged.)

Dates of composition:

1. July, 1909.(MS.)
2. 1st September, 1909.(MS.)
3. August, 1909.(MS.)
4. April, 1910.(MS.)

Dedication: Mlle. Blanche Selva.

First performance: 28th January, 1911:

Société Nationale, Salle Pleyel.

Mlle Blanche Selva.

(Date given by V. 45, H. 134. Cat. 17 gives 23rd January, 1911 - a misprint?.)

Publisher: R.L.

Op.15. Evocations. Symphonic poem for solo Voices, Chorus and Orchestra (text by M.-D. Calvocoressi).

1. Les Dieux dans l'ombre des cavernes.
2. La Ville rose.
3. Aux bords du Fleuve sacré.

Date of composition: 1910-1911.

Dedications:

1. Gustave Samazeuilh.

2. Carlos de Castera.
3. Octave Maus.

First performance: 18th May, 1912:
Société Nationale, Salle Gaveau.
Rhené-Bâton (conductor).

Publisher: D. (Full score; pocket score;
reduction for two pianos by A.R.; re-
duction for one piano - four hands-by
L. Roques.)

Op. 16. Sonatina for Piano.

Modéré - vif et très léger.
Très lent - modéré.

Date of composition: 3rd September, 1912.(MS.)

Dedication: Mlle. Marthe Dron.

First performance: 18th January, 1913:
Société Nationale, Salle Erard.
Mlle. Marthe Dron.

Publisher: D.

Op. 17. Le Festin de l'Araignée. Ballet-
pantomime in one act. Scenario by Count
Gilbert de Voisins.

Date of composition: 1912 (V. 64 gives
'last quarter 1912').

Dedication: Jacques Rouché.

First performance: 3rd April, 1913; Théâtre
des Arts.
Gabriel Grovlez (conductor).
Décors: Dethomas.
Choreography: Léo Staats.
(For further details see V. 71.)

Publisher: D. (Orchestral score of complete
ballet; reduction of complete ballet for
piano - two hands - by A.R.; orchestral

score of 'symphonic suite' for piano -
four hands - by L. Roques; pocket score
of 'symphonic suite'.)

Op. 18. Padmâvatî. Opera-ballet in two
acts. Libretto by Louis Laloy.

Date of composition:

Vocal score completed in 1914 (copyright
taken out by D. in 1914).

Orchestration completed 28th November,
1918. (MS.)

Dedication: Mme. Albert Roussel.

First performance: 1st June, 1923: Théâtre
National de l'Opéra.

Philippe Gaubert (conductor).

Production: Pierre Chéreau.

Décors: Valdo-Barbey.

Choreography: Léo Staats.

(For further details see V. p.95).

Publisher: D. (Full orchestral score; re-
duction for voices and piano - two hands -
by A.R.)

Op. 19. Deux Mélodies, for Voice and Piano.

1. Light (G. Jean-Aubry).

2. A Farewell (E. Oliphant).

Dates of composition:

1 and 2: 1918. [Cat. gives 1 as 1913 (p.99)
and 1918 (p.18). 1913 is a misprint: V.
99 confirms later date.]

Dedications:

1. Mme. Gaston Frager.

2. Edwin Evans.

First performance: Société Nationale,
Salle des Agriculteurs.

Mme. Lucy Vuillemin.

Louis Vuillemin (piano).

Publisher: D.

Op. 20. Deux mélodies (René Chalupt), for
Voice, with piano or orchestral accompani-
ment.

1. Le Bachelier de Salamanque.
2. Sarabande.

Date of composition: 1919.

Dedications:

1. Jacques Durand.
2. Mme. Lucy Vuillemin.

First performances:

1 and 2 (a) Voice and Piano.
27th December, 1919: Société Nationale,
Salle des Agriculteurs.
Mme. Lucy Vuillemin.
Louis Vuillemin (piano).

(b) Voice and Orchestra.
9th December, 1928: Concerts de
l'Orchestre Symphonique de Paris.
Claire Croiza.
Louis Fourestier (conductor).

Publisher: D.

Op. 21. Impromptu, for Harp.

Date of composition: March, 1919.

Dedication: Mlle. Lily Laskine.

First performance: (Privately, 6th April,
1919, at the home of Mlle. Goupil: Lily
Laskine.)
14th December, 1919: Société Musicale Indé-

pendante, Salle Gaveau.
Mlle. Lily Laskine.

Publisher: D.

Op. 22. Pour une Fête de printemps.
Symphonic poem.

Date of composition: January - February,
1920.

Dedication: Eugène Gigout.

First performance: 29th October, 1921:
Concerts Colonne.
G. Pierné (conductor).

Publisher: D. (Orchestral score; pocket
score; reduction for one piano - four
hands - by L. Garban; reduction for
two pianos - four hands - by A.R.)

Op. 23. Second Symphony, in Bb.

1. Lent - assez animé.
2. Modéré.
3. Très lent - modérément animé.

Date of composition:

(V. 105)

1. July - September, 1919.
 2. April, 1920.
 3. June - August 1920.
- (H. 63 and Cat. 38 give dates as 1919 - 1921.
Roussel probably completed the short score
in August 1920, and the orchestration in
the following year.)

Dedication: Rhené-Bâton.

First performance: 4th March, 1922: Concerts
Pasdeloup.
Rhené-Bâton (conductor).

Publisher: D. (Orchestral score; pocket

score; reduction for one piano - four hands - by L. Garban.)

Op. 24. La Naissance de la Lyre. 'Conte lyrique' in one act and three tableaux, after Sophocles. Text by Théodore Reinach.

Date of composition:

Piano score completed 14th September, 1923.
(MS.) Orchestral score completed 28th March, 1924.(MS.)

Dedication: Serge Koussevitsky.

First performance: 1st July, 1925: Théâtre National de l'Opéra.

Philippe Gaubert (conductor).

Production: Pierre Chéreau.

Décors: Legueult, Brianchon.

Choreography: Mme. Nijinska.

Publisher: D. (Vocal score by A.R. Symphonic fragments.)

Op. 25. Madrigal aux Muses (Gentil Bernard), for three female voices a capella.

Date of composition: 16th - 20th October, 1923.

Dedication: Poul Schierbeck.

First performance: 6th February, 1924:

Société Musicale Indépendante.

Groupe Nivard.

Publisher: D.

Op. 26. Deux poèmes de Ronsard, for Voice and Flute.

1. Rossignol, mon mignon.

2. Ciel, aer et vens.

Date of composition: April, 1924.

Dedications:

1. Mme. Ninon Vallin.
2. Mme. Claire Croiza.

First performances:

1. 15th May, 1924: Théâtre du Vieux-Colombier.
Mme. Ninon Vallin (no other performer recorded.)
2. 28th May, 1924. (Cat. 18. No further details given.)

Publisher: D. (Rossignol, mon mignon
first appeared in the Supplement to the
Revue Musicale, in May, 1924.)

Op. 27. Joueurs de Flûte, for Flute and
Piano.

1. Pan.
2. Tityre.
3. Krishna.
4. Monsieur de la Péjaudie.

Date of composition: August - September,
1924.

Dedications:

1. Marcel Moyse.
2. Gaston Blanquart.
3. Louis Fleury.
4. Philippe Gaubert.

First performance: 17th January, 1925:
Concert de la Revue Musicale.

L. Fleury.
Mme. Janine Weill.

Publisher: D.

Op. 28. Sonata No.2, in A major, for
Violin and Piano.

Allegro con moto.

Andante.

Presto.

Date of composition: January - September, 1
1924.

Dedication: J. Guy Ropartz.

First performance: 15th October, 1925:
Festival of the Société Musicale Indé-
pendante. (Cat.18. No further details.)

Publisher: D.

Op. 29. Segovia, for Guitar.

Date of composition: April, 1925.

Dedication: A. Segovia.

First performance: 25th April, 1925: Madrid.
Segovia.

Publisher: D. (For guitar; for piano -
two hands - by A.R.)

Op. 30. Sérénade, for Flute, Violin, Viola,
Violoncello and Harp.

Allegro.

Andante.

Presto.

Date of composition: July - September, 1925.

Dedication: René le Roy.

First performance: 15th October, 1925:
Festival of the Société Musicale Indé-
pendante.

Publisher: D. (Pocket score; reduction
for piano - four hands - by L. Garban.)

Op. 31 and Op. 32. Odes Anacréontiques
(trans. Leconte de Lisle), for Voice
and Piano.

Op. 31, No.1. Ode XVI: Sur lui-même.
Op. 31, No.2. Ode XIX: Qu'il faut boire.
Op. 31, No.3. Ode XX: Sur une jeune fille.
Op. 32, No.1. Ode XXVI: Sur lui-même.
Op. 32, No.2. Ode XXXIV: Sur une jeune fille.
Op. 32, No.3. Ode XLIV: Sur un songe.

Date of composition: April - September, 1926.

Dedications:

Op. 31, No.1: Tony Jourdan.
Op. 31, No.2: Charles Sautolet.
Op. 31, No.3: René Dommange.
Op. 32, No.1: Henry Fabert.
Op. 32, No.2: Edmond Warnery.
Op. 32, No.3: Henry Le Boeuf

First performances:

Op. 31, No.3 and Op. 32, No.3: 17th May,
1926: Concert Bathori.
Complete set: 30th May, 1927: Concert
Durand.
Edmond Warnery.

Publisher: D. (Op. 31, No.1, and Op. 32,
Nos. 1 and 2 are also arranged with or-
chestral accompaniment by A.R.)

Op. 33. Suite in F, for Orchestra.

Prélude.
Sarabande.
Gigue.

Date of composition: January - September,
1926.

Dedication: Serge Koussevitsky.

First performance: 21st January, 1927:
Boston, Mass.

Boston Symphony Orchestra.
Serge Koussevitsky (conductor).

Publisher: D. (Orchestral score; pocket
score; reduction for piano - four hands -
by A.R.)

Op. 34. Concert, for small orchestra.

Allegro.
Andante.
Presto.

Date of composition: October, 1926 -
February, 1927.

Dedication: Walther Straram.

First performance: 5th May, 1927: Concert
Straram.
Walther Straram (conductor).

Publisher: D. (Orchestral score.)

Op. 35. Deux poèmes chinois (H.P. Roché,
after Giles) for Voice and Piano.

1. Des Fleurs font une broderie (Li-Ho).
2. Réponse d'une épouse sage (Chang-Chi).

Date of composition: 1927. (MS. date on
No.1 is 25th June, 1927.)

Dedications:

1. Pierre Bernac.
2. Mme. Marcelle Gérard.

First performances:

1. 5th July, 1928; Fontainebleau.
Pierre Bernac.
2. 23rd May, 1927.
Mme. Gérard.
(H. 139. No further details.)

Publisher: D. (No. 2 is also arranged
with orchestral accompaniment by A.R.)

Op. 36. Concerto in G, for Piano and
Orchestra.

Allegro molto.

Adagio.

Allegro con spirito.

Date of composition: July - October, 1927.

Dedication: Mme. Lucie Caffaret.

First performance: 7th June, 1928: Concert
Koussevitsky.

Alexandre Borovsky (piano).

Serge Koussevitsky (conductor).

Publisher: D. (Orchestral score; pocket
score; reduction for two pianos - four
hands.)

Op. 37. Psalm 80, for Tenor Solo, Chorus
and Orchestra.

Date of composition: April - August, 1928.
Completed 31st August, 1928. (MS.)

Dedication: Her Majesty Queen Elisabeth
of the Belgians.

First performance: 25th April, 1929:

Théâtre National de l'Opéra.

Albert Wolff (conductor).

Orchestre Lamoureux.

Chorale de la Schola de Nantes.

Publisher: C.C. Birchard and Co., Boston,
Mass. (Orchestral score; vocal score.)

Op. 38. Jazz dans la nuit (René Donmange),
for Voice and Piano.

Date of composition: December, 1928.

Dedication: Mme. René Dommange.

First performance: 18th April, 1929:
Festival Roussel, Salle Gaveau.

Mme. Claire Croiza.

Publisher: D. (Also arranged with orchestral accompaniment by P. Vellones.)

Op. 39. Petite Suite, for Orchestra.

1. Aubade.
2. Pastorale.
3. Mascarade.

Date of composition:

1 and 3: 31st January, 1929. (MS.)

2: June, 1929.

Dedications:

1. Mme. Henry Le Bocuf.
2. Mme. Khristoffer Nirop.
3. Mme. Jules Dostrée.

First performances:

1 and 3: 11th April, 1929: Festival
Roussel.

Walther Straram (conductor).

Whole Suite: 6th February, 1930: Concerts
Straram.

Walther Straram (conductor).

Op. 40. Trio, for Flute, Viola and Violon-
cello.

Allegro grazioso.

Andante.

Allegro non troppo.

Date of composition: September, 1929.

Dedication: Mrs. Elizabeth S. Coolidge.

First performance: 29th October, 1929:
Concert Coolidge.

Barrère (flute).

Tertis (viola).

Kindler (violoncello).

Publisher: D.

Op. 41. Prelude and Fughetta, for Organ.

Date of composition: July, 1929.

Dedication: Mme. Nadia Boulanger.

First performance: 18th May, 1930.

Mlle. Piedelièvre.

Publisher: D. (A transcription for string
orchestra has been made by F. Goldbeck.)

Op. 42. Third Symphony, in G minor.

Allegro vivo.

Adagio.

Vivace.

Allegro con spirito.

Date of composition: August, 1929 - March
1930.

Dedication: The Boston Symphony Orchestra
and its conductor, Serge Koussevitsky.

First performance: 17th October, 1930:
Boston.

Boston Symphony Orchestra.

Koussevitsky (conductor).

Publisher: D.

Op. 43. Bacchus et Ariane. Ballet in two
acts. Scenario by Abel Hermant.

Date of composition: June - December, 1930

Dedication: Mme. Hélène Tony-Jourdan.

First performance: 22nd May, 1931: Théâtre National de l'Opéra.

Philippe Gaubert (conductor).

Décor: Georges de Chirico.

Choreography: Serge Lifar.

Principal dancers: Lifar, Spessiwetzewa, Peretti.

Publisher: D. (Orchestral score; pocket score; reduction for piano - two hands - by A.R.)

Op.44. Deux Idylles (translated by Leconte de Lisle), for Voice and Piano.

1. Le Kérioklépte (Theocritus).
2. Pan aimait Ekhô (Moskhos).

Dates of composition:

1. 5th May, 1931.(MS.)
2. 16th October, 1931.(MS.)

Dedications:

1. Mme. Régine de Lormoy.
2. Mme. Yvonne Brothier.

First performance: 5th March, 1932: Société Nationale.

Régine de Lormoy.

A. Hoérée (piano).

Publisher: D.

Op. 44 (sic). A Flower given to my daughter (James Joyce), for Voice and Piano.

Date of composition: 1931.

Dedication: None

First performance: 16th March, 1932: London. Dorothy Moulton.

Publisher: D. First appeared in The Joyce Book; Sylvan Press, London.

Op. 45. String Quartet, in D major.

Allegro.

Adagio.

Allegro vivo.

Allegro moderato.

Date of composition: December, 1931 - June, 1932.

Dedication: Henry Le Boeuf.

First performance: 9th December, 1932:
Brussels.
Pro Arte Quartet.

Publisher: D.

Op. 46. Prelude and Fugue, for Piano.

Date of composition: Prelude, 1934; Fugue,
September, 1932.

Dedication: Henri Gil-Marchex.

First performance (Prelude and Fugue);
23rd February, 1935: Société Nationale.
H. Gil-Marchex.

Publisher: D. (The Fugue first appeared in
the special issue of the Revue Musicale,
Hommage à Bach, in December, 1932.)

Op. 47. Deux poèmes chinois (H.P. Roché,
after Giles), for Voice and Piano.

1. Favorite abandonnée.

2. Vois, de belles filles.

Date of composition: 1932.

Dedications:

1. Mme. Bourdette-Vial.
2. Mme. Vera Janacopulos.

First performance: 4th May, 1934, at the
Triton.

Mme. Bourdette-Vial.

Publisher: D.

Op. 48. A Glorious Day, for Military Band.

Date of composition: November - December, 1932.

Dedication: None.

First performance: July, 1933.

Garde Republicaine.

Publisher: D. (Conductor's condensed score
by A.R.)

N.B. This work is arranged for French and
American military bands respectively.

Op. 49. Trois Pièces, for Piano.

Allegro con brio.

Allegro grazioso.

Allegro con spirito.

Date of composition: August - November, 1933.

Dedication: Robert Casadesus.

First performance: 14th April, 1934:

Société Nationale.

Robert Casadesus.

Publisher: D.

Op. 50. Deux mélodies (René Chalupt), for
Voice and Piano.

1. Coeur en péril.

2. L'Heure du retour.

Date of composition:

1. December, 1933: 2. January, 1934.

Dedications:

1. Mlle. Marcelle Bunlet.
2. Mlle. Lucy Vauthrin.

First performances:

1. December, 1934.
2. January, 1935.
(No other details are recorded by H. or Cat.)

Publisher: D.

Op. 51. Andante and Scherzo, for Flute and Piano.

Date of composition: January - April, 1934.

Dedication: Georges Barrère.

First performance: 17th December, 1934:
Convegno de Milan.

Publisher: D.

Op. 52. Sinfonietta, for String Orchestra.

Allegro molto.
Andante.
Allegro.

Date of composition: 12th June - 6th August,
1934. (MS.)

Dedication: Mme. Jane Evrard.

First performance: 19th November, 1934:
Salle Gaveau.
Mme. Jane Evrard and her ladies' orchestra.

Publisher: D.

Op. 53. Fourth Symphony, in A major.

Lento - Allegro con brio.

Lento molto.

Allegro scherzando.

Allegro molto.

Date of composition: 10th August - 31st
December, 1934.

Dedication: Albert Wolff.

First performance: 19th October, 1935:
Concert Pasdeloup.
Albert Wolff (conductor).

Publisher: D.

Op. 54. Aeneas. Ballet with chorus in one
act and two tableaux. Text by Joseph
Weterings.

Date of composition: March - April, 1935.

Dedication: To the memory of Henry Le Boeuf.

First performance: 31st July, 1935: Brussels.
Hermann Scherchen (conductor).

Décor: Hélène Scherbatow.

Choreography: Léonide Katchourowsky.

Publisher: D. (Orchestral score; vocal
score. Text in French and Italian.)

Op. 55. Deux Mélodies (Georges Ville), for
Voice and Piano.

1. Vieilles cartes, vieilles mains.

2. Si quelquefois tu pleures...

Date of composition: 1935.

Dedications:

1. Mme. Blanc-Audra.

2. Mlle. Madeleine Whita.

First performance: 24th January, 1936.
Mme. Blanc-Audra.

Publisher: D.

Op. 56. Rapsodie Flamande, for Orchestra.

Date of composition: April - July, 1936.

Dedication: Erich Kleiber.

First performance: 12th December, 1936;
Brussels: Société Philharmonique.
Erich Kleiber (conductor).

Publisher: D.

Op. 57. Concertino, for Violoncello and
Orchestra.

Allegro moderato.

Adagio.

Allegro molto.

Date of composition: August - September, 1936.

Dedication: Marix Loevensohn.

First performance: 6th February, 1937: Concerts
Poulet-Siohan.
Pierre Fournier (violoncello).
Robert Siohan (conductor).

Publisher: D. (Orchestral score; version
for violoncello and piano arranged by A.R.)

Op. 58. Trio for Violin, Viola and Violon-
cello.

Allegro moderato.

Adagio.

Allegro con spirito.

Date of composition: June - July, 1937.

Dedication: Pasquier Trio.

First performance: 4th April, 1938: Concert
Albert Roussel.
Pasquier Trio.

Publisher: D.

Op. 59. Elpénor. 'Poème radiophonique' by
Joseph Weterings. Incidental music for
Flute and String Quartet.

Date of composition: Uncertain. See Demuth,
op. cit., p.192. Published in 1947.

Dedication: Juliette Weterings.

First performance: None noted.

Publisher: D. (Text and score.)

N.B. The sub-title quoted by Demuth (91),
La Flûte de Circe, is omitted from the
published text. The text is considerably
shorter than is implied by the synopsis
in Demuth, and several items of music
mentioned are also absent. Moreover,
the timpani is omitted from the score.

Without opus number: Deux Madrigaux à
quatre voix.

Chanson du XV^e siècle.
Le Soucy.

Date of composition: 1897.

Dedication: ?

First performance: 5rd May, 1898: Société
des Compositeurs: Salle Pleyel.
Albert Roussel (conductor).
Mlles. Elinora and C. O'Korke.
Mm. Lubet and De Clynsen.

Unpublished. Destroyed (?).

Without opus number: Conte à la poupée,
for Piano.

Date of composition: 1904.

Dedication: ?

First performance: None noted.

Published in the Album de la Schola Cantorum.

Without opus number: Petit canon perpétuel,
for Piano.

Date of composition: 1913.

Dedication: Mme. la Comtesse de Chaumont-
Quitry.

First performance: None noted.

Publisher: D.

Without opus number: Doute, for Piano.

Date of composition: 1919.

Dedication: Claude Dubosq.

First performance: 1930: Société Nationale.
Mme. Grovlez.

Publisher: D. (First appeared in Feuillets
d'Art, 15th December, 1919.)

Without opus number: L'Accueil des Muses,
for Piano.

Date of composition: September, 1920.

Dedication: To the memory of Claude Debussy.

First performance: 24th January, 1921:
Société Musicale Indépendante. (H. 136:
no further information given.)

Publisher: D. (First appeared in the Supplement to the Revue Musicale, in December, 1920.)

Without opus number: Fanfare pour un sacre païen, for Brass and Drums.

Date of composition: October, 1921.

Dedication: *None*

First performance: 25th April, 1929:
Théâtre National de l'Opéra.
Orchestre Lamoureux.
A. Wolff (conductor).

Publisher: D. (First appeared in Fanfare, London, December, 1921, scored for four trumpets and three drums. Durand's version is scored for four horns, four trumpets, three trombones and three drums.)

Without opus number: Duo, for Bassoon and Violoncello or Double-Bass.

Date of composition: 1925.

Dedication: Serge Koussevitsky (on the occasion of his nomination as Chevalier de la Légion d'Honneur).

First performance: None noted. (Private performance mentioned in Cat. 85, without date or executants.)

Publisher: D.

Without opus number: Le Bardit des Francs, for four-part male chorus, with Brass and Percussion (ad libitum).

Date of composition: 1926.

Dedication: To the memory of Christian
Preissch.

First performance: 21st April, 1928: Stras-
bourg.

Chorale Strasbourgeoise.

E.G. Münch (conductor).

Publisher: D. (First appeared in the
collection Le Renouveau Choral, Colmar
(no date), for chorus a capella. Durand's
version is scored for chorus and accompani-
ment of brass and percussion.)

Without opus number: Sarabande, for Piano
duet (from L'Eventail de Jeanne).

Date of composition: April, 1927.

Dedication: Mme. Jeanne Dubost.

First performance: (Privately, 16th June,
1927): Publicly, 4th March, 1929.
(Cat. 19 and 32).

Publisher: D.

Without opus number: Vocalise, No.1, for
Voice and Piano.

Date of composition: 1927.

Dedication:

First performance: 20th December, 1928.
Mlle. J. Darnay.

Publisher: Lemoine. (First appeared in
L'Art du Chant: Recueil de Vocalises
modernes, Paris, 1928.)

(1928 is date of copyright: H. gives 1927.)

Without opus number: Vocalise, No.2, for
Voice, with Piano or Orchestra (or-
chestration by Arthur Hoérée).

Date of composition: 1928.

Dedication: M^{me}. Régine de Lormoy.

First performances:

(with piano) 13th April, 1929.

Régine de Lormoy.

Pierre Maire.

(with orchestra) 17th December, 1930:

Charleroi Festival.

Régine de Lormoy.

Quinet (conductor).

Publisher: Leduc. (Also arranged by Arthur
Hoérée as Aria, for flute or oboe or
clarinet or violin or viola or violoncello
with piano or orchestral accompaniment.)
(First appeared in Répertoire moderne de
Vocalises - Etudes Vol.10, Paris, 1930.)

(1930 is date of copyright: H. gives 1928.)

Without opus number: O bon vin, ou as-tu crû?
'Chanson de terroir' from Champagne.

Collected by M^{me}. G. Devignes. Harmonised
by Roussel.

Date of completion: October, 1928.

Dedication: M^{me}. Régine de Lormoy.

First performance: 13th April, 1921.

Régine de Lormoy.

Pierre Maire.

Publisher: D.

Without opus number: Le Testament de la Tante Caroline. 'Opéra-bouffe' in three acts. Libretto by Nino.

Date of composition: 1932-1933.

Dedication: Julia and Jan Reisser.

First performance: 14th November, 1936:
Olmutz. Performance in Czech.
A. Heller (conductor).

First performance in French: 11th March,
1937: Opéra-Comique.
R. Désormières (conductor).

Publisher: Editor, Paris-Brussels. A
'Suite-Fantaisie' for wood-wind, brass
and strings, arranged by Roussel, is
based on extracts from the operetta.

Without opus number: Pipe in D major,
for French Flageolet and Piano.

Date of composition: 1934.

Dedication: Mrs. James Dyer.

First performance: None noted.

Publisher: L'Oiseau-Lyre, in a collection
of pieces for French flageolet (pipeau)
and piano by different composers.

N.B. The title refers to the instrument,
which is built in D major. The expansion
Pipe Tune in D major, used by Demuth and
Grove, is therefore incorrect. The piece
is not in D major, but G major.

Without opus number: Prélude to Act II of
Le Quatorze Juillet, by Romain Rolland.
For Wood-wind, Brass and Percussion.

Date of composition: 1936. (Copy of auto-

graph MS. in Conservatoire Library gives
12th June, 1936.)

Dedication: *None.*

First performance: 14th July, 1936:
Théâtre de l'Alhambra.
R. Désormières (conductor).

Publisher: Chant du Monde.

Without opus number: Andante for Oboe,
Clarinet and Bassoon.

Date of composition: July - August, 1937.

Dedication: *None.*

First performance: Not to be performed
publicly. (Privately performed 30th
November, 1937 by the Trio d'Anches
de Paris.)

Publisher: Appeared in a Supplement to
the Revue Musicale, November, 1937.

Works destroyed.

- 1892: Fantaisie for Violin and Piano.
- c.1892: Opera on a North American Indian legend (unfinished).
- 1892: Andante for Violin, Viola, Violoncello and Organ (Ave Maria).
- 1893: Marche Nuptiale.
- c.1901: Quintet for Strings and Horn. Performed at the Société Nationale, 2nd February, 1901. (For further details of performance see H. 130.)
- c.1902: Sonata for Violin and Piano. Performed at the Société Nationale, 5th May, 1902. (For further details of performance see H. 130.)
- c.1905: Vendanges: symphonic sketch. Performed at the Nouveau Théâtre, 18th April, 1905. A Cortot (conductor).
- c.1914: Le Roi Tobol. Unfinished opera on a text by Jean Louis Vaudoyer.

Songs (dates unknown).

Les Rêves (Armand Silvestre).

Pendant l'attente (Catulle Mendès).

Tristesse au jardin (L. Tailhade).

Music for a film (date and title unknown).

APPENDIX B

Articles by Roussel

Although he was never a professional critic, Roussel occasionally contributed articles to various publications. The following list is more comprehensive than that of Arthur Hoérée, upon which it is based. But it is possible that some articles still remain undiscovered in lesser-known or short-lived periodicals.

Wagner et nos musiciens; opinion d'Albert Roussel.

La Grande Revue: 10th April, 1909. (A warning against exchanging the yoke of Wagnerism for that of 'Debussyism', and a plea for a style reflecting French heritage.)

Siegfried à la Monnaie. Art Moderne, Brussels, c.1910.

Young French Composers. The Chesterian, London, October, 1919.

Debussy et l'Ecole moderne. L'Echo Musicale, special Debussy number, November, 1919. (A much longer analysis of the influence of Debussy. Roussel combines a tribute to Debussy's genius and originality with a warning against a servile imitation of his methods.)

Florent Schmitt. Le Monde Musical, 15th and 28th February, 1920.

Quelques jeunes compositeurs français. Il Piano-forte, March, 1921.

Indtryk Fra Mit Ophold i København (Impressions of my sojourn in Copenhagen), Musik, Copenhagen, April, 1923.

Souvenirs d'Albert Roussel. Cinquante ans de Musique Française, Vol.II. Paris, 1925. (Deals with his early years as a naval officer and a young student of music.)

The Orchestra of the Future. Modern Music, New York, November - December, 1925. (Predicts a trend towards composition for smaller orchestral forces.)

Les Vues de quelques compositeurs sur la musique contemporaine. Lettre d'Albert Roussel. Le Monde Musicale, 30th January, 1926. (Quotes the preface to The Nigger of the Narcissus, by Joseph Conrad, as his own artistic philosophy.)

Enquête sur le Jazz. Réponse d'Albert Roussel. Paris-Midi, 1925. Reproduced in Le Jazz, Paris, 1926.

Inspiration; opinion of Albert Roussel. The Chesterian, January - February, 1928.

Rozwazania o Muzyce Wspolczesny (Reflections on contemporary music). Muzyka, Warsaw, 20th March, 1928.

Schubert the Symphonist. The Chesterian, November, 1928.

Enquête sur la musique de chambre. Réponse d'Albert Roussel. Le Courrier Musical, 15th March, 1928.

Rousseliana; fragments d'écrits d'Albert Roussel. Le Courrier Musical, 15th April, 1929.

Symphonie en Si bémol: Vincent d'Indy. Latinité, March, 1930. (A warm appreciation and a technical analysis.)

Sur la Musique de ballet. Le Mois, October, 1931. (An important statement of his conception of ballet music.)

Excerpts from a travel diary. The Chesterian,
December, 1931.

Jean Cartan. La Revue Musicale, May, 1932.

L'Evolution de la musique symphonique en France.
Courrier de la Plata, 15th September, 1935.

Hommage à Joseph Suk. Comoedia, 25th October, 1935.

Savoir choisir. Le Point. Preface to issue devoted
to music, 1936.

Comment j'ai écrit 'Le Testament de la Tante Caroline'.
L'Intransigeant, 24th February, 1937.

La Musique à l'Ecole. La Page Musicale, 9th July,
1937.

Note sur l'interprétation de la deuxième symphonie
(op.23). Catalogue, p. 129. (Detailed advice
which gives an insight into the author's own
conception of his work.)

Note sur la mise en scène de 'Padmâvatî'. Catalogue,
p.130.

Réflexions sur la musique d'aujourd'hui. Bernard:
op. cit., p.121.

APPENDIX C

Bibliography

(a) Books and Articles in English.

DENUTH, NORMAN: Albert Roussel: a Study. London, 1947.

Roussel and the French Tradition.
Music Survey, Vol.1, No.3.

EVANS, EDWIN: Albert Roussel. The Chesterian,
December, 1925.

HENRY, LEIGH: Albert Roussel. Musical Opinion,
London, September - October, 1923.

LOCKSPEISER, E.: Roussel and Ravel. Music and Letters,
1938, XIX.

MELLERS, WILFRID: Albert Roussel and La Musique
Française. Studies in Con-
temporary Music, London, 1948.

Albert Roussel. Article in Grové's
Dictionary of Music and Musicians,
5th Edition, Vol. VII, London, 1954.

PRUNIERES, H.: Albert Roussel and the 80th Psalm.
The Musical Quarterly, January,
1930.

(b) Books and Articles in French.

The volume of critical writing on Roussel in French is considerable. Much of it, however, is of negligible value, and only the most important sources are listed here.

(1) Critical Biographies and Catalogues.

BERNARD, ROBERT: Albert Roussel. Paris, 1948.

CATALOGUE de l'Oeuvre d'Albert Roussel: Editor,
Paris - Brussels, 1947.

HOÉRÉE, ARTHUR: Albert Roussel. Paris, 1937.

VUILLEMIN, L. : Albert Roussel et son oeuvre. Paris,
1924.

(ii) Special issues of periodicals devoted to
Roussel.

LE COURRIER MUSICAL: 15th April, 1929. Hommage à
Albert Roussel, including, inter alia,
articles by:

Hoérée, A.: L'Homme, La Vie, L'Oeuvre.

Samazeuilh, G.: Le Théâtre d'Albert Roussel.

LA REVUE MUSICALE: April, 1929. Albert Roussel,
including, inter alia, articles by:

Brillant, M.: Portrait d'Albert Roussel.

Chalupt, R.: Le Reflet du monde extérieur dans
l'oeuvre d'Albert Roussel.

George, A.: Albert Roussel et la Mélodie.

Le Flem, P.: L'Oeuvre symphonique de Roussel.

Prunières, H.: Le Psaume LXXX.

Ferroud, P.-O.: La Musique de chambre d'Albert
Roussel.

Gil-Marchez, H.: La Musique de piano d'Albert
Roussel.

Hoérée, A.: La Technique.

Boulanger, N.: L'Oeuvre théâtrale d'Albert
Roussel.

Also a Musical Supplement, Hommage à Roussel, containing compositions by:

C. Beck; M. Delage; A. Honegger; A. Hoérée; J. Ibert;
D. Milhaud; F. Poulenc; A. Tansman.

LA REVUE MUSICALE: November, 1937. A la Mémoire d'Albert Roussel, including, inter alia, articles by:

Cortot, A.: L'oeuvre pianistique d'Albert Roussel.

Emmanuel, M.: Les premières oeuvres orchestrales.

Samazeuilh, G.: L'oeuvre lyrique et chorégraphique.

Delvincourt, C.: Le langage harmonique.

Also a Musical Supplement, containing the Andante for Flute, Clarinet and Bassoon, by Roussel.

(iii) Other articles.

AURIC, G.: Un de nos Maîtres. Gringoire; 19th April, 1929.

CARRAUD, G.: Albert Roussel. Le Monde Musical, January, 1920.

CORTOT, A.: La Musique française de piano. Troisième série. Paris, 1944. Albert Roussel.

FERROUD, P.-O.: Un musicien français: Roussel. Latinite, May, 1929.

ROLAND-MANUEL: Albert Roussel. La Revue Musicale, November, 1922.

SELVA, BLANCHE: La Sonate. Paris, 1913, pp.230-8.

VAN DER LINDEN, A.: Albert Roussel et Octave Maus.
Revue belge de musicologie,
IV, 4. 1950.

(iv) General surveys of background interest.

SÉRÉ, O.: Musiciens français d'aujourd'hui. Paris,
1921.

LANDORMY, P.: La Musique française après Debussy.
Paris, 1943.

DUMESNIL, R.: La Musique en France entre les deux
guerres 1919-1939. Paris, 1946.

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Andante for unfinished wind trio; 182.

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